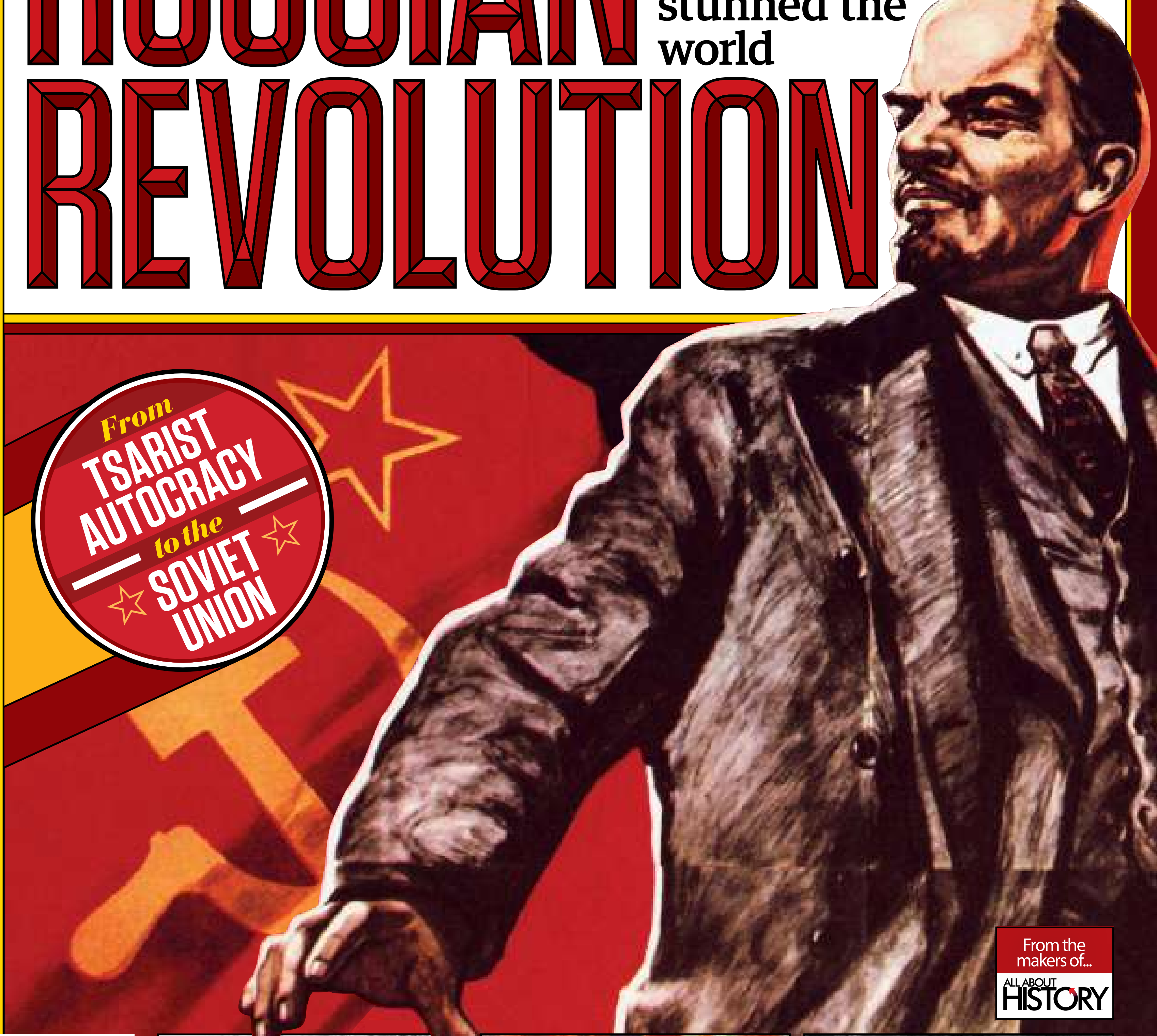
NEW

RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Explore the bloody Bolshevik takeover that stunned the world



From TSARIST AUTOCRACY to the SOVIET UNION

From the makers of...
ALL ABOUT HISTORY

Digital Edition

ПРИБАВКУ ПАЙКА
СЕМЬЯМЪ СОЛДАТЪ
ЗАЩИТНИКАМЪ СВОБОДЫ
И НАРОДНАГО МIРА

WHY THE TSAR HAD TO FALL

THE RISE OF MARXIST IDEAS

THE TRAGEDY OF ANASTASIA

FUTURE
EIGHTH EDITION

Welcome to
RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

The Russian Revolution was the bloodiest transfer of power the world has yet seen and ushered in decades of secrecy, suppression and state-sponsored persecutions across one-sixth of the Earth's landmass. But what was the touchpaper that lit the fuse? What caused agrarian, unchanging Russia to throw off the shackles of centuries of absolute rule and embrace a radical, untested political ideology? How did the Marxist ideals the revolutionaries espoused change when they were put into practice, and what effect did this have on Russian society, from the entrenched and hidebound aristocracy at the top of the food chain to the millions of peasants whose labour paid for their elaborate lifestyles? Discover the answers to these questions and more as you explore the causes, events, key figures and outcome of the Russian Revolution and learn how it changed, not only its homeland but the shape of politics and international relations around the world forever. Learn how and why Marxist ideals appealed to Russian intelligentsia at the turn of the 20th century, discover the not-so-hidden power behind the Tsar's throne and explore the series of events, from crushing military defeats to rationing and shortages at home that culminated in a popular uprising against more than 300 years of Romanov rule and opened the door to decades of totalitarian communist control over the world's largest country and its allied states.

A NOTE ON THE DATES

Up until 14 February 1918, Russia used the Julian calendar, while the majority of the world had adopted the Gregorian calendar centuries before. For this reason, dates before 14 February 1918 are given in both the Old System (OS) and New System (NS) format to reflect the dates on which events occured in Russia compared to the rest of the world.

FUTURE

RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

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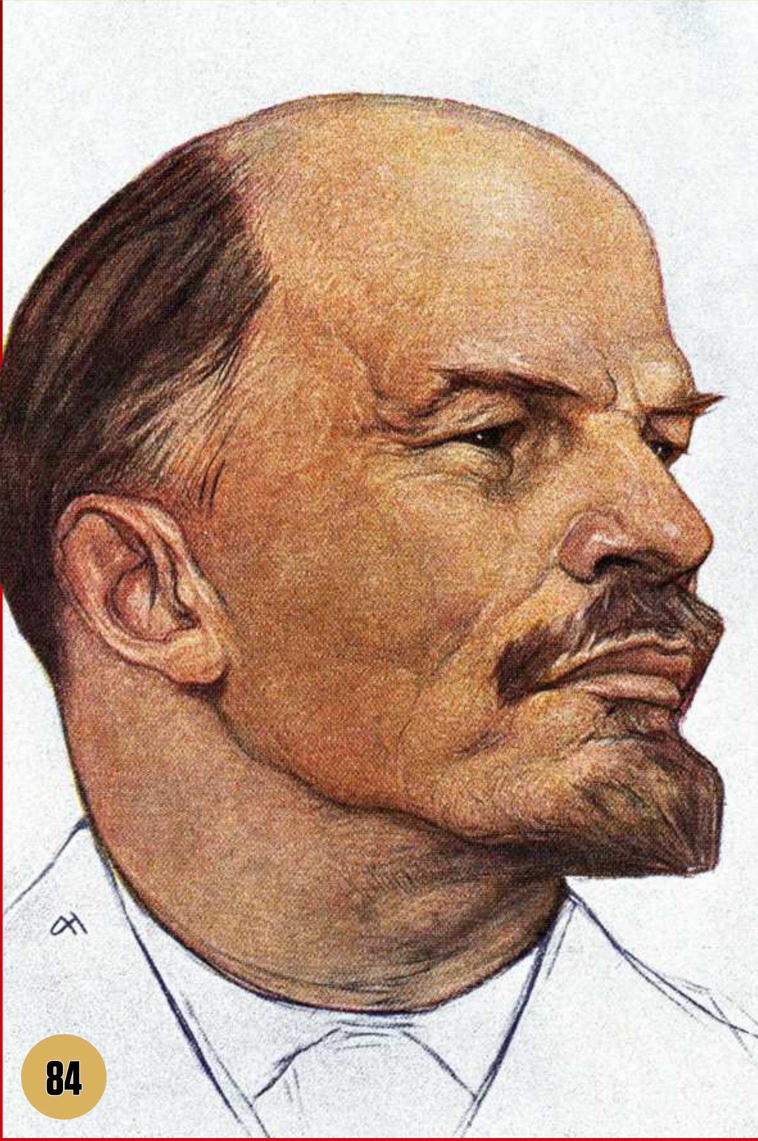

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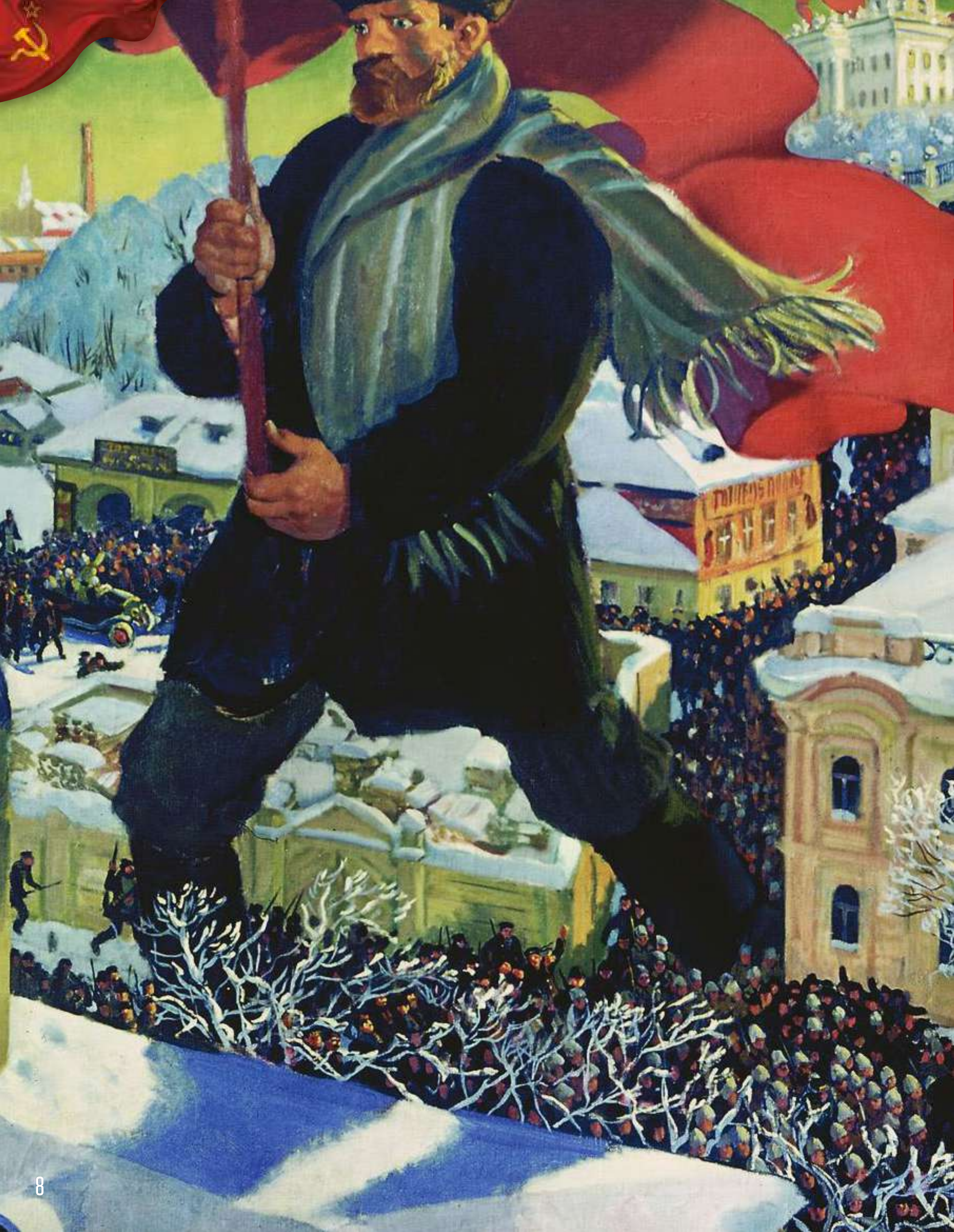


17 things

You probably didn't know about the

RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

The Russian Revolution changed the country forever – 105 years later, here are a few lesser known facts

Russia had weathered the revolutionary storm in 1905

THE 1917 UPRISING WAS RUSSIA'S BIGGEST, BUT NOT ITS FIRST

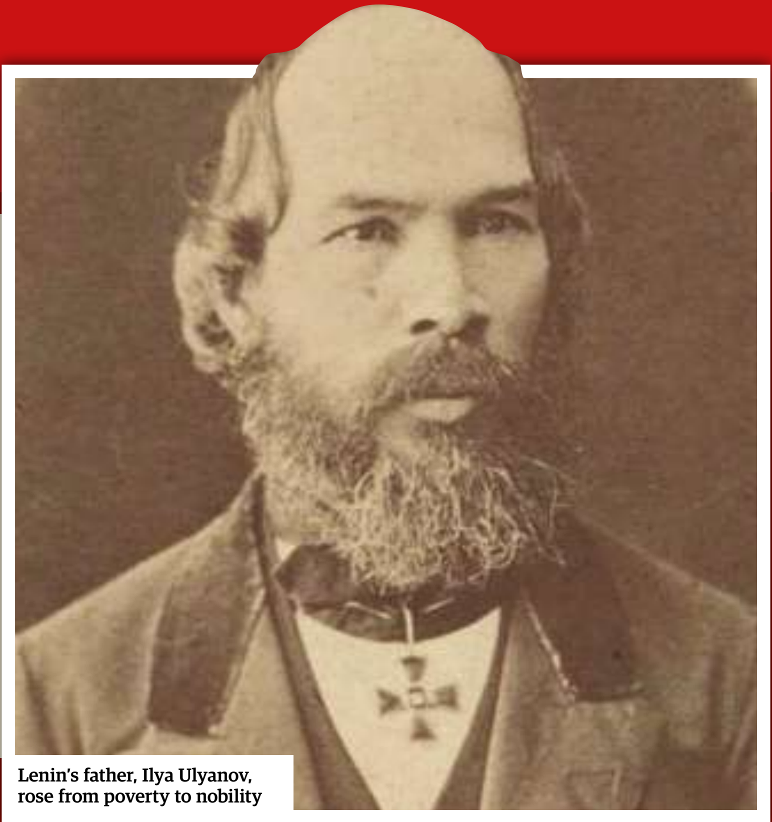
1

Although the consequences of the 1917 insurgency for the Romanov dynasty were catastrophic, it wasn't the first revolt that they had experienced. In fact, Tsar Nicholas II had already weathered the storm of revolution in 1905 (see p28), an experience that had left him battered and weakened. Although he avoided a complete disaster in the earlier uprising, he was forced to agree to concessions that limited his powers, resulting in the launch of the October Manifesto, which agreed to a number of demands made by his subjects. These included measures to improve civil liberties, universal male suffrage and the introduction of an elected legislature known as the Duma. Above all, however, in 1905 the immensely powerful military remained loyal to the tsar's regime whereas, 12 years later, they did not. This was a crucial tipping point – when Nicholas lost the backing of the military, he also lost the throne.

LENIN WAS BORN TO NOBLE PARENTS

2

Though presented to the nation as the ultimate man of the people, Lenin's real origins were far grander than he liked to let on. He relied on the immensely powerful Bolshevik propaganda machine to create a background worthy of a revolutionary leader and give the impression that he was a working-class hero. In fact, Lenin's father had been born to a family of serfs but had clawed his way up to the top of middle classes, undertaking a university education and marrying the wealthy daughter of a doctor. He enjoyed a glittering civil service career and was eventually awarded the Order of St Vladimir, which turned the one-time serf into a hereditary nobleman. Lenin's parents were both conservative monarchists yet this fact, as well as his noble birth, were whitewashed from his carefully rewritten public biography, which told a tale of heroic lower-class struggle.


Lenin's father, Ilya Ulyanov, rose from poverty to nobility

Young Stalin was already a thorn in plenty of sides

STALIN'S EXILE WAS MORE LIKE A HOLIDAY

3

When Stalin was exiled to Selivanikha in Siberia in 1914 by the authorities, he spent his days hunting, fishing and communing with nature. He became popular in his new home and performed medical duties for the local community, as well as making friends among the local children, whom he liked to entertain. He was so popular that the community made a gift to Stalin of a dog, which he named Tishka. Yet Stalin still found time in his busy social schedule to father a child of his own. When World War I broke out and he was ruled unfit for duty, Stalin was moved to Achinsk. It was here in 1917, while staying with fellow Bolsheviks, that he learned that the February Revolution had taken place in Petrograd (Saint Petersburg). He left for Petrograd that same day.

Stalin's exile was spent beside the Yenisei River

STALIN MIGHT HAVE WORKED FOR THE TSAR'S SECRET POLICE

4

As early as 1916, accusations were being made that Stalin had once worked for the Okhrana, the secret police of the Russian Empire. The young Stalin, going by the alias Koba, seemed to be able to travel freely despite his known revolutionary leanings and wasn't subject to the same restrictions as his peers. Eyewitnesses claimed that Stalin regularly met Okhrana representatives and always knew who was about to be arrested, yet always escaped arrest himself. While this would suggest that Stalin was a traitor to his own cause, others have reflected that he was a realist who knew when to cosy up to the officers of the Okhrana. Stalin recognised that money, influence and power were all valuable, regardless of which side they came from.

STAFF TURNOVER WAS SHOCKINGLY HIGH

5

Tsar Nicholas II chose to personally lead Russian troops during World War I. When he went to the front in September 1915, he left Tsarina Alexandra in charge of domestic affairs – assisted by her personal advisor, the mystic monk Rasputin. The tsarina's rule was beset by scandal and fatally unstable. Thanks to jealous Alexandra's habit of dismissing anyone she considered disloyal, the Russian government had four prime ministers and ministers of agriculture, five ministers of the interior and three foreign ministers, war ministers and ministers of transport – all in just 18 months. This meant that nobody was in a position long enough to actually learn their job and the restless public were keen to find an alternative that might offer some sense of stability.

ДА ЗДРАВСТВУЕТЪ СВОБОДНАЯ РОССІЯ!
2 МАРТА 1917 г.
НОВОЕ ВРЕМЕННОЕ ПРАВИТЕЛЬСТВО.
КН. Г.Е. ЛЬВОВЪ
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During the tsarina's rule, the government was in constant upheaval

The Romanovs were famed for their extravagant wealth

THE ROMANOVS WERE WORTH A FORTUNE

6

When Nicholas II abdicated the throne in February 1917 in the face of growing unrest, the House of Romanov had ruled Russia for 303 years straight. They were one of the richest families in the world, worth some $45 billion at the time of Nicholas' abdication, which would be approximately $300 billion today. Intriguingly, more than $1 billion-worth of the imperial family's gold remains unaccounted for to this day, with the sum having disappeared while in transit to the Remington Arms Company to buy a shipment of weapons for the White Army. What became of that wealth has been the subject of questions and conspiracy theories ever since and to this day, pretenders to the House of Romanov occasionally come forward to make their claim to a portion of this fortune. So far, none have been successful.

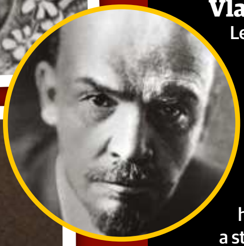
7

Faces of the Revolution

Whether monarch or Bolshevik, meet the major players of the Russian Revolution

Tsar Nicholas II

Nicholas II was the last emperor of Russia and also a devotee of cinema, which he popularised in his homeland. A reluctant tsar, when he first came to throne, Nicholas presided over the collapse of the once almighty Russian Empire. In the end, he paid the ultimate price for his failure.



Vladimir Lenin

Lenin whitewashed his past to up his working-class cred. He championed socialism but was less fond of music, which he flatly refused to listen to. This highly divisive figure championed the Red Terror, which mercilessly swept aside his opponents, but fell victim to a stroke in 1924.

Tsarina Alexandra

Alexandra Feodorovna was the wife of Nicholas II and the mother of his five children. This granddaughter of Queen Victoria adored the colour mauve and had her boudoir entirely decorated in a bespoke mauve silk that was imported from Paris. This room can still be seen today at the Alexander Palace.

Joseph Stalin

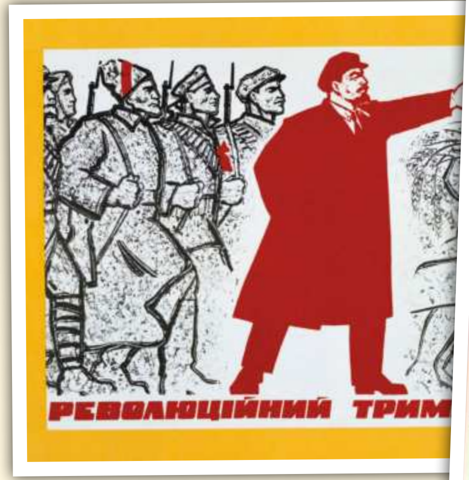
Uncle Joe rose from humble beginnings to rule the Soviet Union for just shy of 30 years, yet still found time to indulge his love of John Wayne's Westerns. Stalin used any means necessary to hold onto power and by the time of his death in 1953, millions had died under his regime.

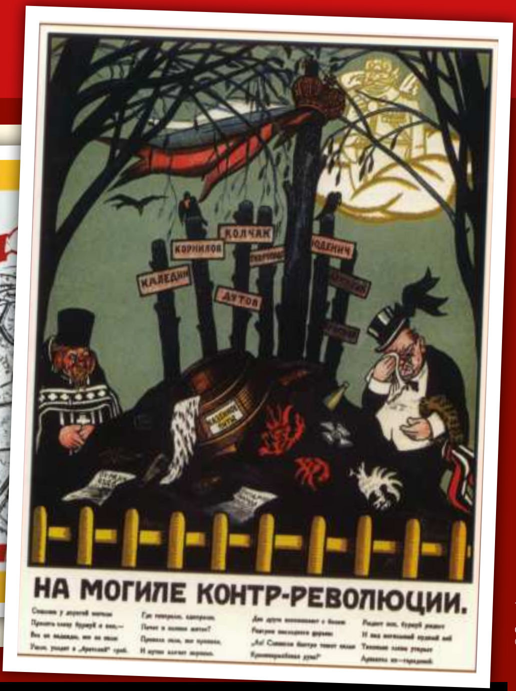
Leon Trotsky

Trotsky considered himself to be a world-class chess player but that didn't help him when he tried to outwit Stalin. One a major figure in the Communist Party, he was exiled and written out of party history. Yet Trotsky was only silenced when an assassin buried an icepick in his skull.

THE REVOLUTION WAS A PROPAGANDA MASTERCLASS

8 The Bolsheviks knew the value of propaganda and used it to devastating effect. From popularising the image of the bourgeois as enemies of the working man to casting the leaders of the uprising as working-class heroes, propaganda played a vital role in the success of the Russian Revolution. Most important of all, Soviet propaganda always carried a clear and inarguable message straight from the top of the regime and required little if any decoding by the audience.





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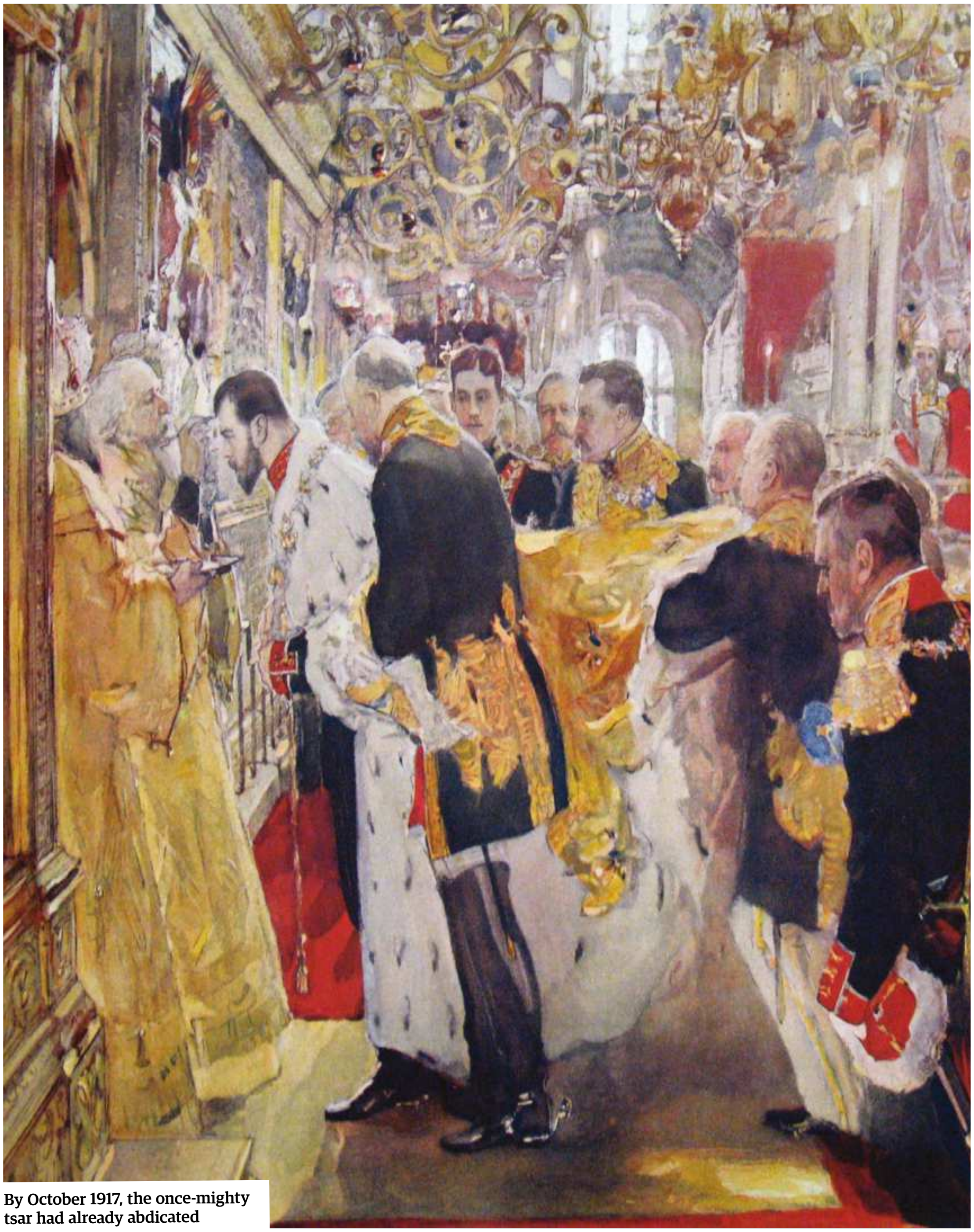
The revolution began in Petrograd – but on what date?

IN EUROPE AND RUSSIA, THE DATES DON'T MATCH

9 Although we know the key events of the Russian uprising as the February Revolution and October Revolution, the unrest actually began on 8 March and 7 November according to Western calendars. The mismatch in the dates is thanks to the fact that Russia was still using the Julian calendar, whereas the rest of Europe had moved over to the Gregorian one. This meant that the two calendars had a discrepancy of almost a fortnight (Both sets of dates are given in this book, up to 1918 when Russia finally adopted the Gregorian calendar). Russia, however, recorded the outbreak of the Petrograd rebellion as 23 February 1917 thanks to a discrepancy in the international calendar. This first episode of unrest came when striking, starving workers rioted. When the military was ordered to open fire on the protestors, they refused. The army, at last, had turned against the tsar.



By October 1917, the once-mighty tsar had already abdicated

THE REVOLUTION DIDN'T OVERTHROW THE TSAR

10

Although many people still believe that the October Revolution was the uprising that unseated the tsar from his throne, that isn't actually the case. In fact, Nicholas abdicated immediately after the February Revolution. He gave up the throne on 2 March 1917 and planned to go into exile abroad, although this plan would never come to pass.

While he initially handed power to his son, Alexei, doctors advised that the little boy was not expected to live long. Nicholas then chose his brother, Grand Duke Michael, as his successor. But Michael refused, citing a lack of popular or military support. With that, the Romanov dynasty surrendered control of Russia. The Duma formed a Provisional Government to hold the country together. This lasted six months, but was hated for its continued commitment to World War I, driving public support for the Bolsheviks.

11

In numbers

10,500,000

Number of deaths during Russian Civil War (2.5 million military, 8 million civilian)

4 hours

Time it took to subdue the Winter Palace and arrest the government

30 minutes

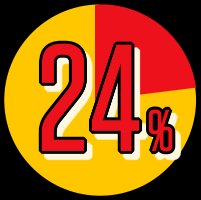
Time it took to execute the Romanov family and their attendants

Number of people killed during Stalin's leadership

25 millon

7

Number of groups that made up the Russian Provisional Government



Percentage of the votes won by Bolsheviks in the 1917 General Election

0.8 kilograms

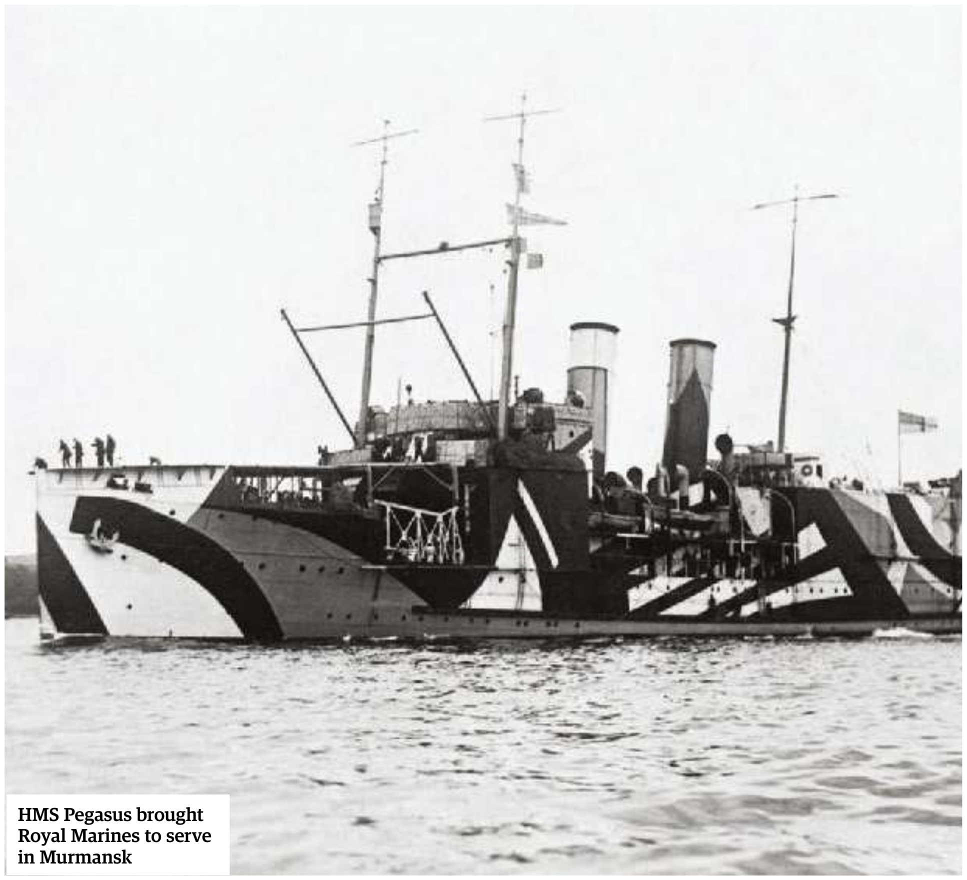
of bread ration per person in 1917, versus 1.25 kilograms in 1916

A stopped clock in the Winter Palace marks the Revolution

THE CLOCK STOPPED AT THE WINTER PALACE

12

At 2.10am on 25 October 1917, the Bolsheviks marched into the small dining room at the Winter Palace and arrested the provisional government of Russia, seizing power once and for all. They had easily overwhelmed the paltry armed brigades who had stayed loyal to the government. It was here that Alexander Kerensky, who had led the provisional government since February, was deposed by Bolshevik forces, members of the cabinet were arrested and the Russian state made its first steps into the communist era. At 2.10am, the moment at which these world-changing steps were taken, someone stopped the clock that stood on the mantelpiece of the dining room. Today it remains as it was 100 years ago, the hands stilled at the very second when the Russian government fell to the Bolshevik revolution.


HMS Pegasus brought Royal Marines to serve in Murmansk

BRITISH FORCES FOUGHT THE BOLSHEVIKS

14

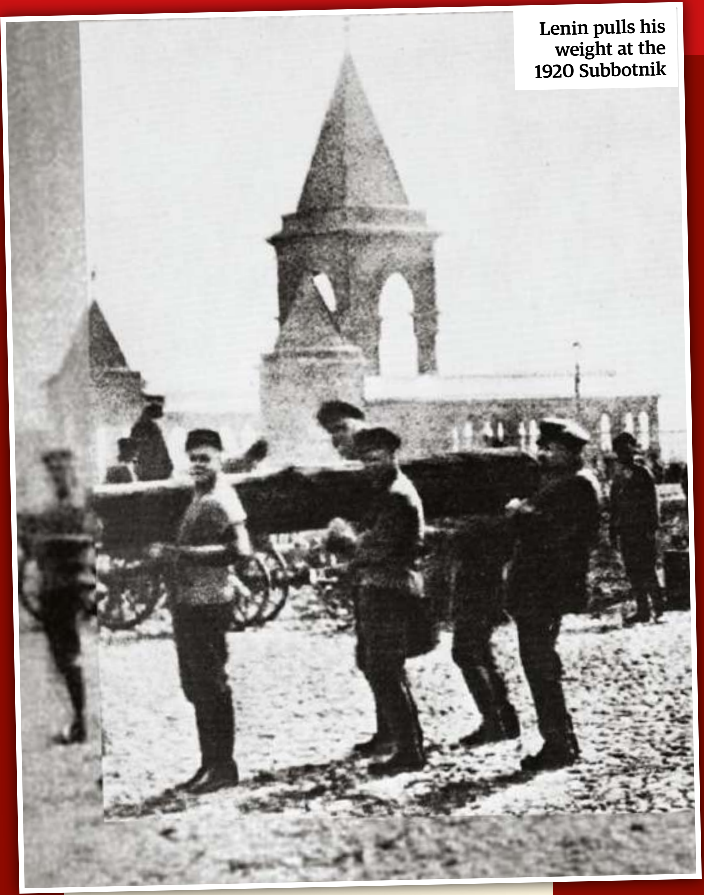
In order to ensure that war supplies intended for Russian use didn't fall into German or Bolshevik hands, the British War Cabinet sent Royal Marines sent to Murmansk on 6 March 1918 to reestablish the Eastern Front. It quickly became apparent that there was to be no cooperation from the Bolsheviks and the British decided that the best thing for the war effort would be to depose the Bolshevik government as quickly as possible. The Royal Marines offered their support to the anti-Bolshevik forces but this mainly took the form of an increased number of weapons and ammunition, as opposed to supplying additional soldiers to fight alongside them. In fact, while War Minister Winston Churchill was strongly in favour of sending additional troops to depose the Bolshevik government, Prime Minister David Lloyd George advocated a less interventionist approach. British forces left Russia in October 1919.

NOT ONLY THE ROMANOVS WERE EXECUTED

13

There can be few people who don't know that the tsar, tsarina and their children were executed in the cellar of a house in Yekaterinburg on 17 July 1918. Their deaths, the fate of their remains and the occasional emergence of fraudsters posing as members of the family have entered into the annals of grisly royal history around the world. Yet it wasn't only members of the House of Romanov who died that night, for they were joined by loyal household staff and servants who had been herded into the cellar to die alongside them. These other victims of the Bolshevik soldiers were Doctor Yevgeny Botkin, cook Ivan Kharitonov, valet Alexei Trupp and Anna Demidova, the tsarina's maid. Anna tried to cover herself with a pillow stuffed with jewels. She survived over 30 bullet wounds, but was eventually bayoneted to death.

Anna Demidova died a gruesome death alongside the royal family



Lenin pulls his weight at the 1920 Subbotnik

NOT ALL OF THE ROMANOVS WERE KILLED

15

It's a common misconception that the entire Romanov family was executed in Yekaterinburg but that isn't the case. At the time the family were executed, there were 65 members of the Romanov dynasty still living – 18 died during the Revolution but the remaining all found sanctuary overseas. Some of those left Russia in 1919 aboard HMS Marlborough, which King George V of the United Kingdom had sent under pressure from his mother, Queen Alexandra. Her sister, Maria Fyodorovna, was the mother of the murdered tsar. Dowager Empress Maria was one of those who boarded HMS Marlborough to safety, yet she refused to do so until the ship had been filled with injured soldiers and any civilian who wanted to flee the approaching Bolsheviks. For her eldest son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren, the British intervention was too little, too late.

HMS Marlborough carried the surviving Romanovs to safety

TRADITIONAL STREET SWEEPING STILL MARKS THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

16

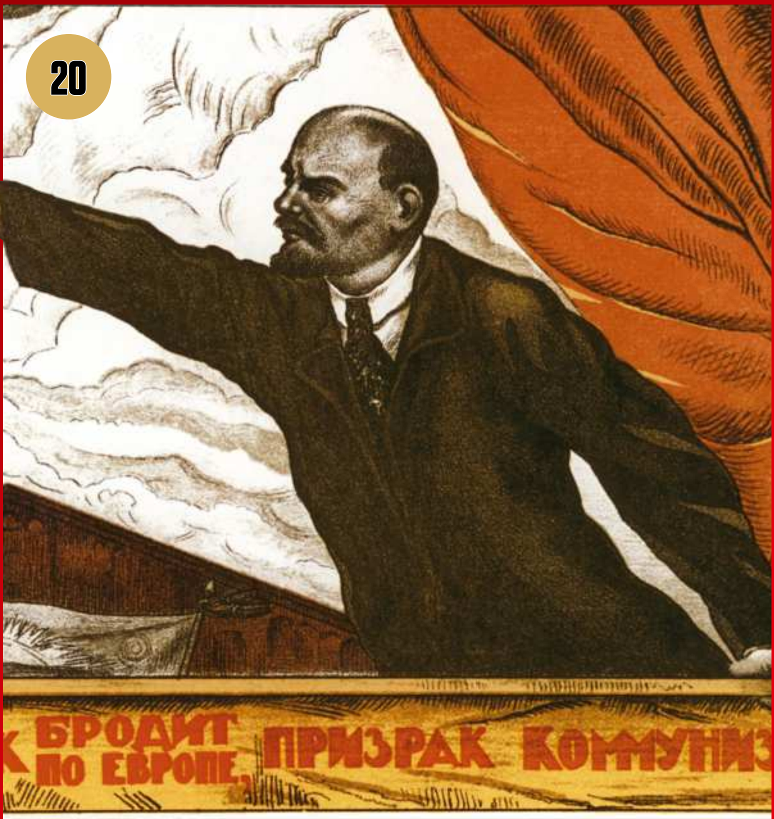
In the months following the October Revolution, citizens were invited to take part in the voluntary workdays known as Subbotniks. These days, which took place every weekend, were opportunities for people to clean up the streets and clear rubble left after the uprisings. Although they were supposedly optional, all were expected to pull their weight and Subbotniks became a regular fixture in every Russian calendar. The first Subbotnik was on 12 April 1919 and the Bolsheviks soon used the occasion as a propaganda tool, issuing pictures showing revolutionary leaders cleaning up the cities for the people. In fact, Lenin viewed the Subbotnik as the first real chapter in the origin of communist Russia. The tradition continues to this day but now the Subbotniks are usually given a civic purpose, such as cleaning up a specific area, collecting and processing recyclables or carrying out other voluntary work of public value.

RASPUTIN'S LION-TAMING DAUGHTER FLED RUSSIA

17

Maria Rasputin was just 18 when the tsarina gave her a gift of jewels that she hoped would pay for the girl to escape from Russia. However, Rasputin had unfortunately already arranged for Maria to marry Boris Soloviev, who saw himself as the Mad Monk's mystical successor, and he took the jewels for his own before their wedding, keeping the money. Following the arrest of the Russian Provisional Government, Maria and Boris went on the run, sheltering with family at locations across Russia. Although Boris was arrested and Maria questioned about those disputed jewels, the couple and their daughter left Russia once and for all in 1920. They lived a nomadic life across Europe, capitalising on Maria's notorious surname. After Boris died, Maria eventually joined a circus in Indiana, in the United States. She worked as a lion tamer, survived an attack by a bear and eventually died in Los Angeles in 1977 at the age of 79.

Maria Rasputin ran away from Russia to join the circus!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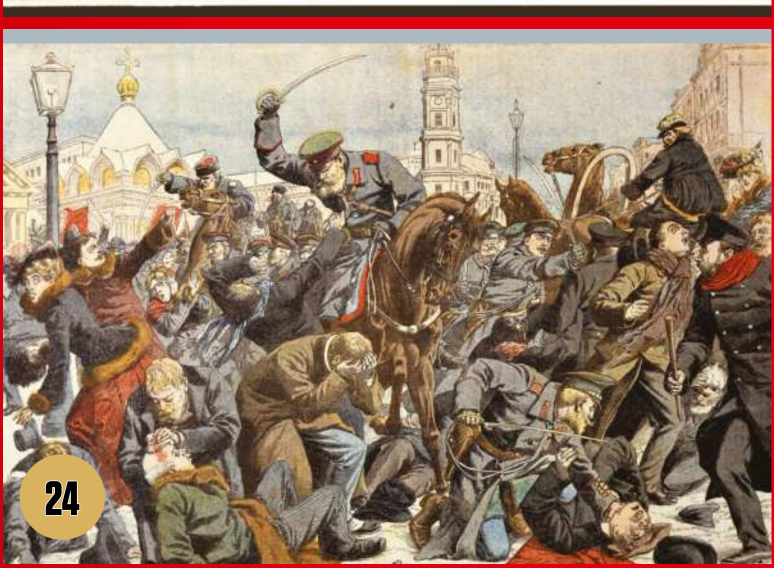

Causes

The maelstrom of social, political and military change that set Russia on the path to the world's bloodiest revolution

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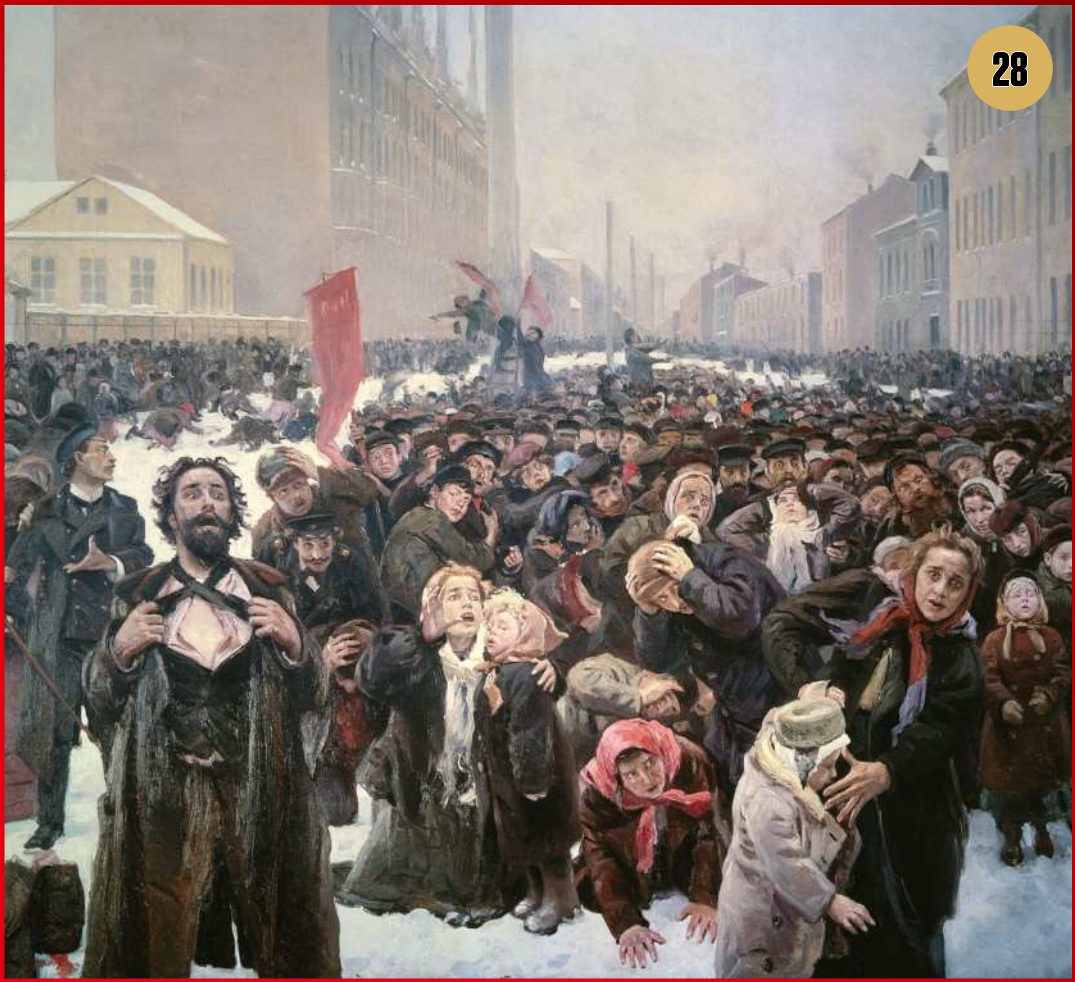

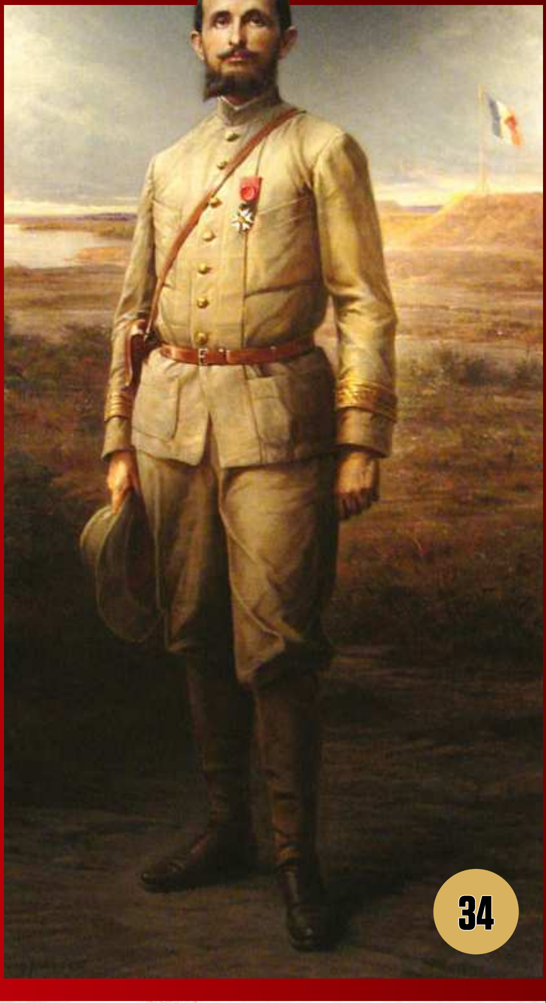

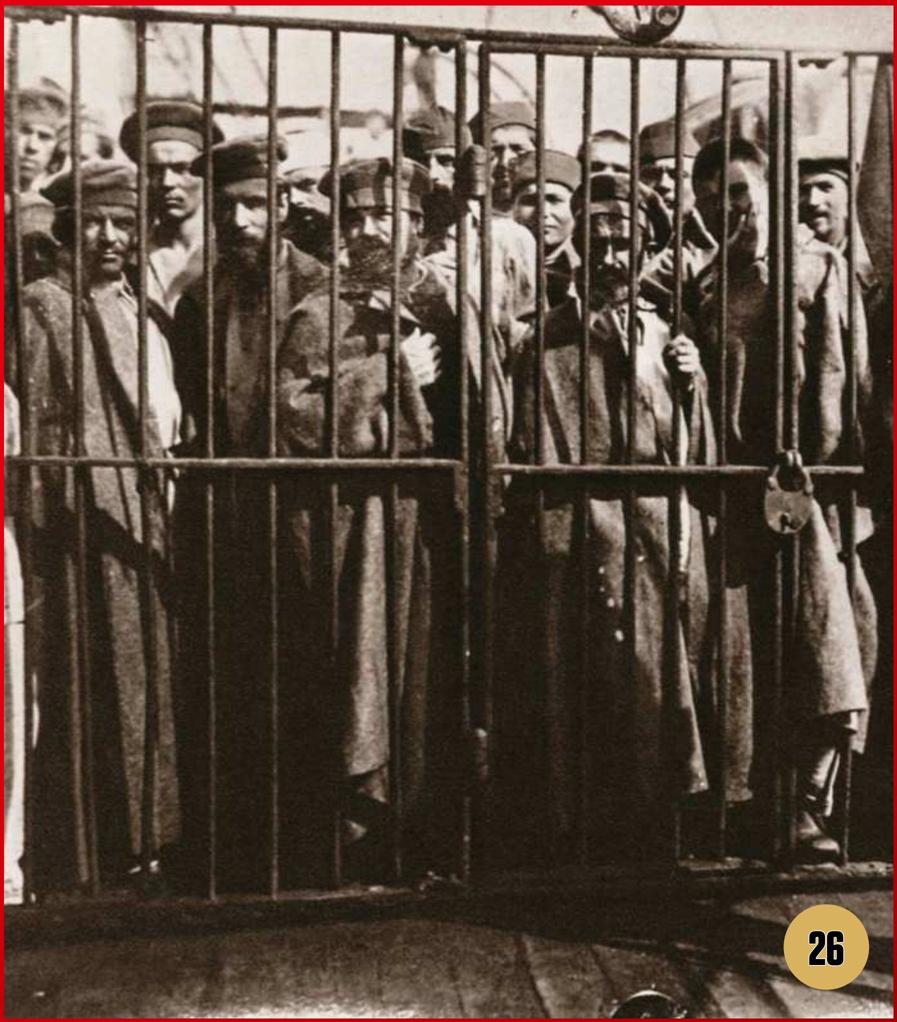

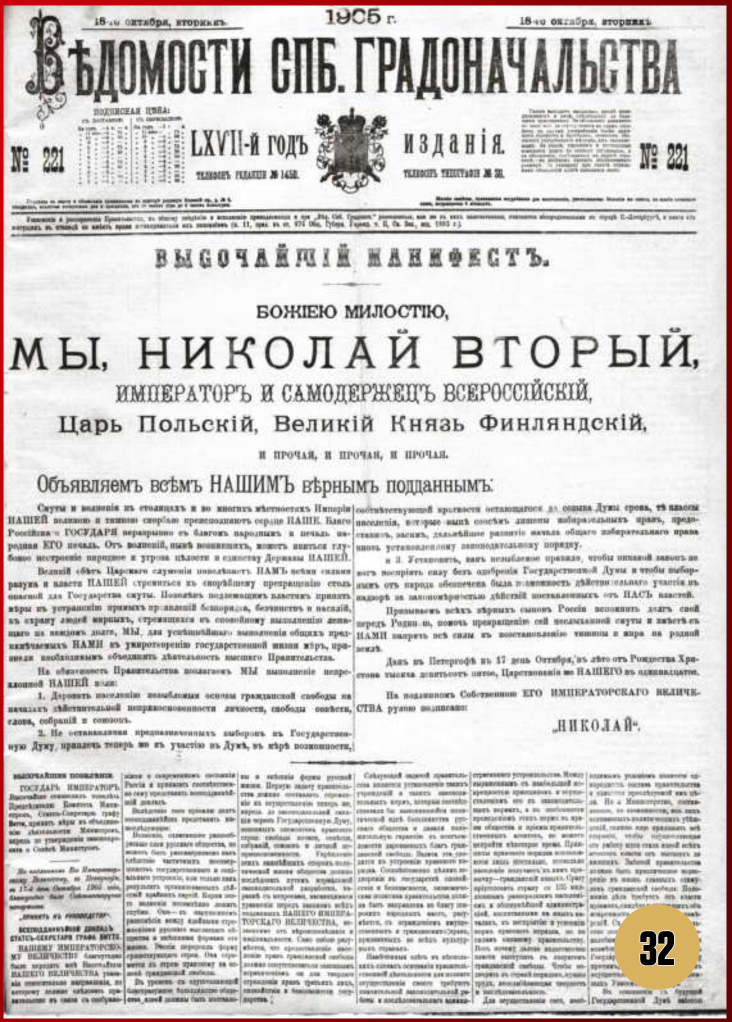

18-го октября, вторникъ. 1905 г. 18-го октября, вторникъ.

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БОЖІЕЮ МИЛОСТІЮ,

МЫ, НИКОЛАЙ ВТОРЫЙ,

ИМПЕРАТОРЪ И САМОДЕРЖЕЦЪ ВСЕРОССІЙСКІЙ,

Царь Польскій, Великій Князь Финляндскій,

и прочая, и прочая, и прочая.

Объявляемъ всѣмъ НАШИМЪ вѣрнымъ подданнымъ:

Смуты и волненія въ столицахъ и во многихъ мѣстностяхъ Имперіи НАШЕЙ великою и тяжкою скорбью преисполняютъ сердце НАШЕ. Благо Россійскаго ГОСУДАРЯ неразрывно съ благомъ народнымъ и печаль народная ЕГО печаль. Отъ волненій, нынѣ возникшихъ, можетъ явиться глубокое нестроеніе народное и угроза цѣлости и единству Державы НАШЕЙ.

Великій обѣтъ Царскаго служенія повелѣваетъ НАМЪ всѣми силами разума и власти НАШЕЙ стремиться къ скорѣйшему прекращенію столь опасной для Государства смуты. Повелѣвъ подлежащимъ властямъ принять мѣры къ устраненію прямыхъ проявленій безпорядка, безчинствъ и насилій, въ охрану людей мирныхъ, стремящихся къ спокойному выполненію лежащаго на каждомъ долга, МЫ, для успѣшнѣйшаго выполненія общихъ предначертываемыхъ НАМИ къ умиротворенію государственной жизни мѣръ, признали необходимымъ объединить дѣятельность высшаго Правительства.

На обязанность Правительства возлагаемъ МЫ выполненіе непреклонной НАШЕЙ воли:

1. Даровать населенію незыблемыя основы гражданской свободы на началахъ дѣйствительной неприкосновенности личности, свободы совѣсти, слова, собраній и союзовъ.

2. Не останавливая предназначенныхъ выборовъ въ Государственную Думу, привлечь теперь же къ участію въ Думѣ, въ мѣрѣ возможности, соотвѣтствующей краткости остающагося до созыва Думы срока, тѣ классы населенія, которые нынѣ совсѣмъ лишены избирательныхъ правъ, предоставивъ, засимъ, дальнѣйшее развитіе начала общаго избирательнаго права вновь установленному законодательному порядку.

и 3. Установить, какъ незыблемое правило, чтобы никакой законъ не могъ воспріять силу безъ одобренія Государственной Думы и чтобы выборнымъ отъ народа обезпечена была возможность дѣйствительнаго участія въ надзорѣ за закономѣрностью дѣйствій поставленныхъ отъ НАСЪ властей.

Призываемъ всѣхъ вѣрныхъ сыновъ Россіи вспомнить долгъ свой передъ Родиною, помочь прекращенію сей неслыханной смуты и вмѣстѣ съ НАМИ напрячь всѣ силы къ возстановленію тишины и мира на родной землѣ.

Данъ въ Петергофѣ въ 17 день Октября, въ лѣто отъ Рождества Христова тысяча девятьсотъ пятое, Царствованія же НАШЕГО въ одиннадцатое.

На подлинномъ Собственною ЕГО ИМПЕРАТОРСКАГО ВЕЛИЧЕСТВА рукою подписано:

„НИКОЛАЙ".

Russia at the beginning of the 20th century

Nicholas II's Russia was rich with opportunities and plagued by despair – but the clash of modern expectations and reality set in motion a chain of events that led to revolution

Nicholas II inherited the largest country in the world, a sprawling empire covering two continents and encompassing one-sixth of the Earth's landmass. In the west, Russia controlled Finland, the Baltic provinces and most of modern Poland. The great Ukrainian Steppe swept south from Saint Petersburg and Moscow, while wheat fields and meandering rivers led to subtropical Crimea.

Central Asian khanates and emirates, subdued by occupation, pledged loyalty to the imperial throne. From the frigid tundra of the north, the Ural Mountains separated European and Asian Russia. Beyond them, the vast and mysterious expanse of Siberia stretched to the Pacific Ocean.

Russians accounted for less than half of the nearly 130 million people living within the empire's borders – more than 100 nationalities comprised the rest of the tsar's subjects. They ranged from Finns and Poles to Tartars, Georgians, Mongols and Jews. With conflicting religions, customs and languages, they had always presented a barely governable mass, held together by Cossack whips, the Okhrana (the dreaded secret police) and inertia more than by loyalty to the Romanovs.

The Tsar ruled as an autocrat, unencumbered by a parliament. He relied on a complex bureaucracy of ministers and provincial officials to carry out his orders, along with the authority of the Russian Orthodox Church, the empire's immense army of over 1 million men and an aristocracy that accounted for just 2 million people but owned more than 90 per cent of the country's wealth. Although there was a burgeoning class of merchants, lawyers, and industrial workers, 87 per cent of the population were peasants.

The empire was a land of contradictions and enormous wealth coexisted with crushing poverty. The arts – painting, music, literature and ballet – flourished despite repressive censorship. Russians were proud of their achievements but were also embarrassed by the backwards nature of their country. Less than one-quarter of the populace was literate when Nicholas II came to the throne, a fact cited to oppose reforms as too dangerous and complex for most Russians to understand.

There were promising developments in the first decade of Nicholas' reign. The Trans-Siberian Railway was under construction, opening up the land for settlement and exploitation. Sergei Witte, who served as the Tsar's minister of finance, was instrumental in improving the economy, placing the ruble on the gold standard to attract foreign investment. But this was a mixed blessing.

The empire enjoyed a higher credit rating than Imperial Germany, and nearly half of the world's foreign capital was invested in the empire's railways, factories and industrial works. Russia's rapid industrial development after 1900 meant that an essentially 18th-century agrarian country had to absorb 20th-century technologies and their problems in the space of a few years. This created a vastly expanded working class that soon became a hotbed of discontent.

Many in this new working class were former peasants, who flocked to Saint Petersburg, Moscow and other industrial centres attempting to escape rural poverty. Alexander II had emancipated the serfs in 1861 but little had actually changed – they continued to toil under almost medieval conditions. Prosperity was elusive and most peasants lived on communal farms, which kept them impoverished and dependent.

Crop failures and famines caused thousands of deaths and left many destitute. Disease and

Key
Japanese advances
Russian states
Western vassals
© Keeby101

alcoholism were rampant. By 1900, these terrible conditions led to mass peasant migration to the cities and the number of Russia's industrial workers doubled. But hope soon evaporated.

Men, women and children toiled for up to 18 hours a day, six days a week. Factory owners claimed the majority of their wages in exchange for a place in the cold, vermin-infested barracks. There was no sanitation – typhus, cholera and dysentery were rife. Strikes and trade unions were prohibited: injury and death were common. Visiting social reformers brought small creature comforts as well as new, revolutionary ideas about the rights of man and the need for the people to have a voice.

Discontent built swiftly and violence became commonplace. Brutal, bloody pogroms erupted with unnerving regularity. Peasants burnt their masters' country estates and provincial officials fell to revolutionary bullets – to be a government official in tsarist Russia was to risk assassination. The new (and illegal) Social Revolutionary Party decided not to wait for concessions but instead force them through violence: between 1902 and 1904, two ministers of the interior and dozens of officials were killed.

Nicholas II's foreign policy only added to the growing mood against the government. His father had severed ties with Germany and allied Russia to France, a treaty that would bring disastrous results in 1914. Nicholas honoured it but also pushed for Russian expansion in Asia in the misguided belief that the Manchurian and Korean peoples would welcome subjugation. Having wrested control of Port Arthur (now Lüshunkou District, Dalian) from China in 1898, the Russians began sending disguised soldiers to Korea in the hope of seizing most of Manchuria.

In early 1904, without declaring war, Japan launched an attack on Russian forces at Port Arthur and the Russo-Japanese War proved to be an unmitigated disaster for the empire. Few Russians shared Nicholas' patriotic enthusiasm for the conflict – why, they wondered, did their comrades need to suffer even more miseries by fighting a battle thousands of miles away just to hold on to an ice-free port? Apathy and anger soon set in as Russia suffered defeat after defeat.

Japan had the benefit of proximity to the battlefields whereas Russia had to ship every soldier and bullet on the still uncompleted Trans-Siberian Railway. Port Arthur fell to Japanese forces in January 1905 and in May, Admiral Togo sent most of the tsar's Baltic Fleet to the bottom of the Tsushima Strait. Defeat was total and Nicholas was forced to accept America's hastily brokered peace treaty that recognised Japanese interests in Korea and Manchuria.

Nicholas II blessing troops in 1904 during the Russo-Japanese War

Never before had the Russian Empire suffered such a demoralising defeat and it did nothing but feed the growing unrest. Violence and illegal strikes erupted with terrifying frequency as workers pushed back against their woeful lot in life and their continued exclusion from any say in how their country was run.

On 9 January (OS) / 22 January (NS) 1905, a radical priest called Georgy Gapon led thousands of workers to Saint Petersburg's Winter Palace, hoping to present Nicholas II with a petition begging for some much-needed improvements. The Tsar's soldiers responded by opening fire, killing hundreds of citizens. Bloody Sunday, as the event came to be called, opened the floodgates. A few weeks later, a bomb hurled by a Social Revolutionary literally blew Nicholas II's uncle and brother-in-law Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich to bits. Strikes, pogroms, vandalism and violence soon enveloped the country.

Russia was standing precariously on the edge of an abyss. By 1905, it was not merely disenfranchised workers who were clamouring for change – students, members of the intelligentsia, merchants, political officials, social reformers and even aristocrats were recognising that their country was slipping into nothing short of chaos. Subversive ideas were now entering the mainstream, autocratic rule was viewed as archaic, and basic human rights and equality dominated talks on factory floors and around the dining tables of the upper classes. How much longer, people were openly wondering, could an autocratic Russia survive?

> "Russia's rapid industrial development after 1900 meant that an essentially 18th-century agrarian country had to absorb 20th-century technologies"

Anti-Semitism in action

Being Jewish in Russia could cost your life

Some 5 million Jews lived in Nicholas II's Russian Empire, most in the infamous Pale of Settlement along the empire's western borders. However, anti-Semitism was rampant – most Russians considered Jews to be guilty of strange rituals and avaricious business practices.

The Tsar was no different, harbouring extreme views towards his Jewish subjects and embracing the Protocols of the Elders of Zion as an example of "the destroying hand of Jewry". Officials encouraged pogroms that left thousands dead and when one brave official dared to suggest granting civil rights to the Jews, Nicholas refused, saying that his conscience would not allow it. Over 1 million Jews fled Russia during the last Tsar's reign.

Victims of a Russian pogrom

Communism in context

The rise of communism in Europe and thence around the globe was energised with the philosophy of Karl Marx and social and political upheaval

The concept of collectivisation in society is as old as civilisation itself. Centralised distribution of food and other necessities of life was common, according to many researchers, among the hunters and gatherers who lived millennia ago. In fact, social scientists have referred to the phenomenon as "primitive communism", perhaps raising to another level the simple idea of sharing.

While modern communism is traced to the mid-19th century and the widespread publication of the political theories of German philosopher Karl Marx, the idea of the common welfare itself is not unique to Marx. During the 6th century BCE, the Greek philosopher Pythagoras championed a society that disavowed private property, believing that ownership fostered social injustice as some prospered while others suffered. Ancient Spartans considered themselves as equals; their land was divided into equal plots; their currency was iron rather than gold or silver, and the welfare of the state was always superior to that of the individual.

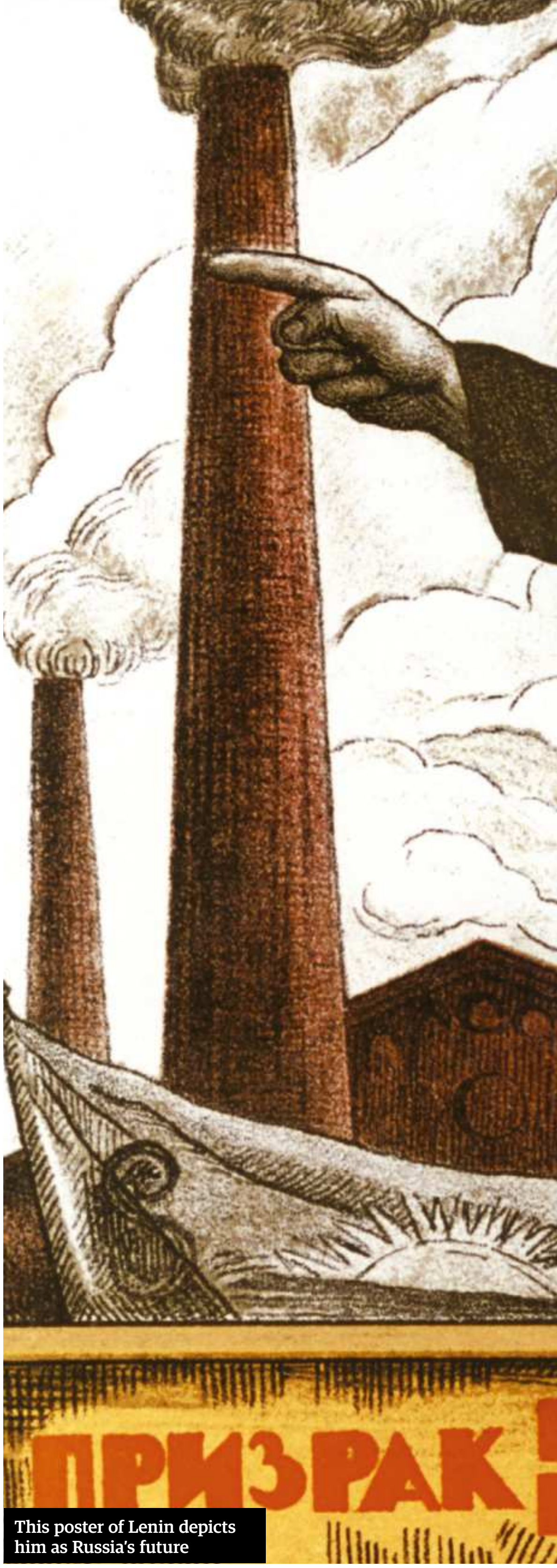
Early Christian tenets suggest communistic tendencies with regard to the sale of personal property, giving money to the poor, and distribution of commodities according to individual requirement. The 6th century followers of the Persian prophet and religious reformer Mazdak believed in the communal ownership of property and social welfare initiatives, while the Essenes and Zandiks are also among other ancient peoples who ascribed to such principles.

> "Marx believed that industrialised societies with capitalist economic components were fertile ground for revolution..."

In the 1400s, the Bohemian Taborite sect concluded, "As in the town of Tabor there is no mine or thine, but all is held in common, so shall everything be common to all, and no one own anything for himself alone. Whoever does so commits a deadly sin." In 1534, Anabaptists seized the city of Munster, Germany, in their attempt to violently propagate communistic principles, including the confiscation of property from the well-to-do. In England, the post-Civil War Diggers declared common ownership of property and called the world a "common treasury". In the 1770s, English immigrants to America known as Shakers sought to develop a utopian society. In literature, Sir Thomas More's satirical *Utopia*, published in the mid-16th century, along with Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* and *News From Nowhere* by William Morris, both published in the late 19th century, provided discourse on utopian themes.

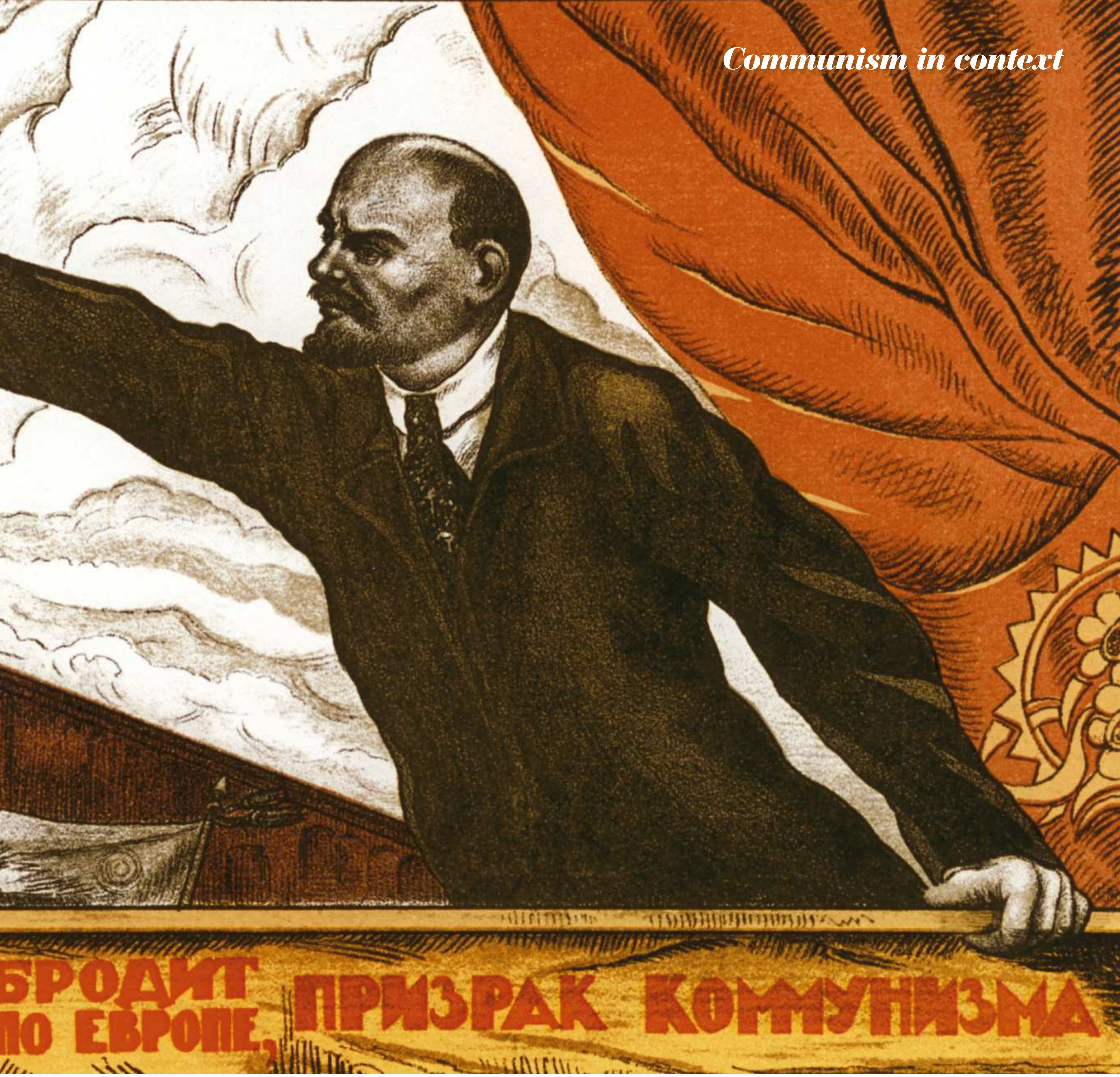
French philosopher Victor d'Hupay is sometimes considered the father of modern communism. In 1777, approximately 70 years prior to the publication of *The Communist Manifesto* by Marx and Friedrich Engels, d'Hupay published *Project for a Philosophical Community*, which describes society in communes with shared means of production and mutual benefit from the work of others.

In theory, pure communism espouses social equality based upon equal benefit derived from the labour of all people. Redistribution of wealth allows the poor to achieve a standard of living in parity with the upper classes, which are actually brought down and eventually disappear. Centralised ownership of the means of production is a key component of state ownership of all property and product, with distribution according to need. Communist theory may be said to have roots in the ideals of socialism, an economic and social system based on equality, with government ownership of the means of production. However, workers in a socialist society earn wages and spend their money without any direct government intrusion despite there being potential restrictions on personal ownership and entrepreneurship.



This poster of Lenin depicts him as Russia's future

Marx is recognised as the most influential proponent of communism. He emphasised that



all history is rooted in class struggle and proffered the theory that a revolution of the proletariat, or working class, would eventually abolish the bourgeoisie and the middle and upper classes. The ownership of private property would die, and ownership of agricultural and industrial means of production would reside with the workers. Marxist nationalisation of wealth and the means of production extends the idea of socialisation, which might allow the coexistence of both pure government ownership and cooperative ownership among workers in a specific enterprise. Eventually, according to Marx, social classes and the state would disappear with the rise of utopian societies.

During the mid-19th century, Europe was experiencing transition as numerous monarchies were either supplanted or yielded some of their authority to democratic bodies while their economies embraced capitalism. Marx believed this was a necessary step in the progression toward a communist society. His specific perspective on the development of communism has become known as Marxism, and Marx believed that industrialised societies with capitalist economic components were fertile ground for revolution, particularly his native country, Germany.

Marxist philosophy hinges on the coming of a workers' revolution that destroys existing governments and economic systems, and a strong leader exerting total control of the working class while government takes charge of choices that formerly belonged to the individual. Property and wealth must be confiscated and controlled by the state. The final resolution of Marxist theory is a classless utopian society in which all property and wealth are shared.

Contrary to Marx's expectation, the first communist nation in the world, the Soviet Union, came into being through revolution in Russia, an agrarian country that was well behind the nations of Western Europe in terms of industrialisation. Russian revolutionary leader Vladimir Lenin was a follower of Marx who put theory into practice while developing his own brand of communism. With Marxism as its foundation, this philosophy came to be known as Leninism. Lenin was compelled to address economic and industrial development on a practical rather than theoretical level, particularly because of the backward status of the Russian economy at the time.

Marx assumed that the proletariat would develop its own class-consciousness and rise up against repressive governments intent on maintaining the status quo, while Lenin asserted that the workers had never developed class-consciousness in industrialised nations because the wealthy provided the proletariat with a living standard just adequate enough to suppress revolutionary fervour. Contrary to Marx, who believed that the proletariat would acquire class-consciousness spontaneously and on its own initiative, Lenin believed communists had to educate the masses and raise their awareness of the inequality of capitalist society, urging them to rise up as they did in Russia in 1917. Marx envisioned a "dictatorship of the proletariat", a society in which all power resided with the working class. Lenin, however, considered the existence of a political party, the Communist Party, essential in government, acting as the instrument of the proletariat.

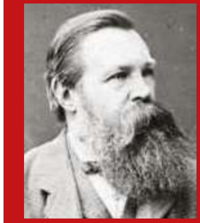
In his later years, Lenin warned against the growing power of Communist Party Secretary Joseph Stalin, fearing that the true communist rule of the party and people was susceptible to the emergence of a strongman who would corrupt the government into a totalitarian regime. While Stalin recognised that industrialisation and increased productivity were necessities, he reversed Lenin's New Economic Policy and mandated collectivisation of farms. Lenin had employed terror as a means of control before him, but Stalin turned on fellow communists in bloody purges of those he deemed disloyal. He also used famine as a weapon, suppressing peasant discontent under collectivisation. Stalinism is characterised by its namesake's ruthlessness, as well as his establishment of a totalitarian dictatorship, promotion of further class conflict,

Georgi Valentinovich Plekhanov was one of the first Russians to identify with Marxist philosophy

> "Marxist philosophy hinges on the coming of a workers' revolution that destroys existing government systems"

Who was Friedrich Engels?

Marx is famous as the founder of modern communism, but who was his co-author?



Remembered as the co-author of *The Communist Manifesto* with Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels was a fellow German philosopher, social scientist, businessman, and author. Engels also contributed to the landmark multi-volume work *Das Kapital*, editing the final volumes after Marx died in 1883, and developed his own theories surrounding the structure of the family unit, arguing that marriage was a mechanism through which men controlled women and the inheritance of property.

Like Marx, Engels resided in England for extended periods. The two met in Paris in 1844 after they had exchanged letters. Although only in his 20s, Engels had already established himself as a foremost proponent of leftist theory. Two years earlier, Engels' father had sent him to England to work in a mill that he owned, hopefully quelling his progressive son's revolutionary tendencies. On the contrary, young Friedrich observed the living conditions of the working class in Manchester and in 1844-45 authored *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, describing the grinding poverty and exploitation of labour by the wealthy. He wrote of the "grim future of capitalism and the industrial age". Therefore, he and Marx shared common perspectives on the future of society in Europe and the wider world. Engels maintained contact with communist organisations in Germany and befriended the left-wing intelligentsia in England. He raised funds for Marx's publishing efforts and personally financed such endeavours. Ironically, Engels also become known as something of a bon vivant, who frequently entertained and enjoyed music, literature, poetry, and fox hunting. Engels died of throat cancer in London in 1895 at the age of 74.

The rise of communism

Primitive communism
Hunter-gatherers of the Paleolithic period, dating to the earliest use of tools 2.6 million years ago, exhibit principles of social equality. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels coin the phrase "primitive communism" in the 19th century.
Prehistory

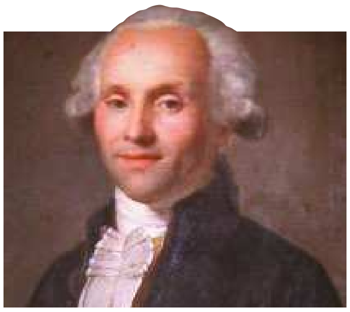
A Pythagorean theory
Followers of ancient Greek philosopher and mathematician Pythagoras ascribe to a communal and simple lifestyle that brings them into conflict with the proponents of democracy. Persecution, including the burning of Pythagorean gathering places, results.
6th century BCE

1524

German Peasants' War
Largely supported by Anabaptist clergy, peasants seeking better living conditions and stronger influence in German-speaking Europe rise in the greatest insurrection prior to the French Revolution. The war is sometimes seen as an early class-related communistic uprising.
1524-1525

Defining moment

Communist primer 1777



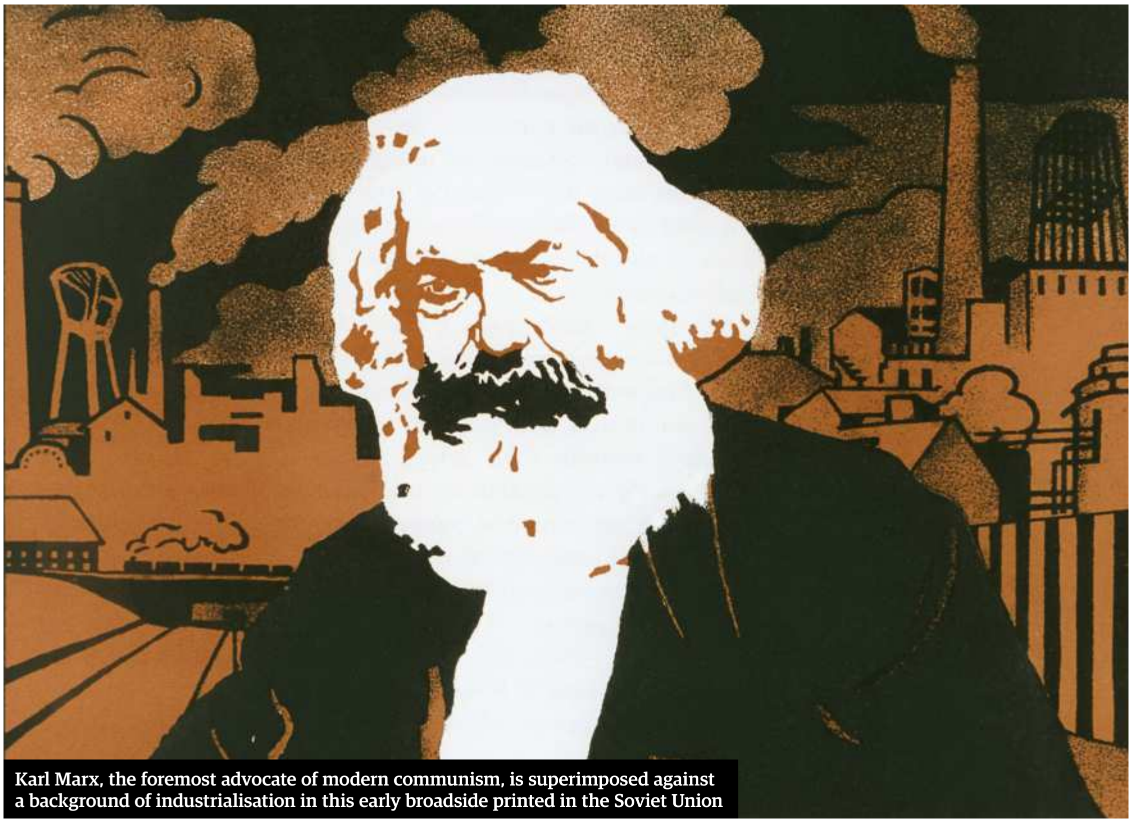
Born into an aristocratic family, French philosopher and author Victor d'Hupay publishes *Project for a Philosophical Community*, a landmark work in the history and development of modern communism. Advocating communal living, the author describes the process and the methodology inherent in communes, advising that the people share all economic and material products between them. D'Hupay is said to have endeavoured to establish his own commune with friends and neighbours at Meyreuil on the Mediterranean coast where he lived. Considered the first theoretician of modern communism, he died in the town of Montagne Saint-Victoire in 1818.

1818

Marx arrives
Karl Marx, whose collaboration with Friedrich Engels produces the Marxist theory of communism, is born into a middle-class family in the Prussian city of Trier. Marx goes on to become one of the most influential figures of the 20th century thanks to his impact on revolutionary thought.
5 May 1818

1840

Industrial Revolution
The Industrial Revolution, which began in 1760 and concluded approximately 80 years later, radically redefined society, giving rise to capitalism and a burgeoning proletariat, or working class. This change served as a catalyst for the development of modern communism.
1840



Karl Marx, the foremost advocate of modern communism, is superimposed against a background of industrialisation in this early broadside printed in the Soviet Union

the spread of communism around the world, and hardline economic policies. Stalin further embraced the theory of "socialism in one country", after the failure of revolutions beyond Russia. Stalin did not consider such inward strengthening of communism in the Soviet Union to be in conflict with the earlier Marxist belief that communism must be established around the world.

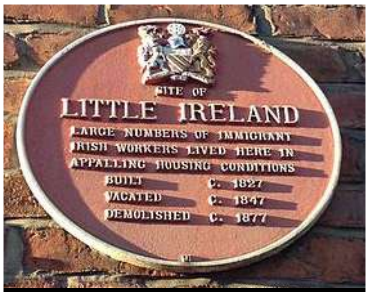
Among those whom Stalin targeted in his rise to absolute power was his old party comrade Leon Trotsky, architect of the Red Army and early confidant of Lenin. Trotsky considered himself a traditional Marxist and opposed Stalin's theory of "socialism in one country". His ideal of "permanent revolution" dictated that workers and peasants must necessarily form an alliance to grasp economic and political power since the bourgeoisie of industrialised capitalist nations would never produce any revolutionary momentum. He also opposed the extensive Stalinist bureaucracy. Trotsky was then discredited, exiled, and finally assassinated by Stalin's movement.

A woman's point of view

Karl Marx wrote to Friedrich Engels that the lady was "very good natured and witty". It was his only written reference to Mary Burns, and one of just a few that pertains to her at all. However, the Irish-born working-class woman was the long-time partner of Engels and likely a profound influence on the development of his social consciousness.

Engels is believed to have met Burns shortly after his arrival in Manchester in 1842. The two were opposed to the bourgeois idea of marriage but maintained a close relationship for nearly 20 years. Burns is probably responsible for calling Engels' attention to the plight of the working class in Manchester, where unbridled capitalism and industrialisation spawned an existence of misery for many while business owners such as Engels' father and his partner, Peter Ermens, prospered through making thread.

Burns died in 1863, and Engels then lived with her sister, Lizzie. Despite the probability of Mary's central role in the formation of communist philosophy, she remains a shadowy historical figure.


SITE OF
LITTLE IRELAND
LARGE NUMBERS OF IMMIGRANT
IRISH WORKERS LIVED HERE IN
APPALLING HOUSING CONDITIONS
BUILT C. 1827
VACATED C. 1847
DEMOLISHED C. 1877

Little Ireland, a slum area of Manchester, England, where a large immigrant population settled to work

Defining moment

The Communist Manifesto 21 February 1848

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels publish *The Communist Manifesto*, a highly influential political pamphlet giving voice to Marxist philosophy and placing Europe on notice that a revolution of the working class, or proletariat, is at hand. Published in London under commission from the Communist League, a party formed in the city less than a year earlier, the *Manifesto* presents an analytical approach to class struggle and the logical progression that is expected to result in worldwide revolution. It concludes, "Let the ruling classes tremble at a communist revolution. The proletariat have nothing to lose but their chains."

Defining moment

October Revolution 25 October/7 November 1917

The Bolsheviks seize power in Saint Petersburg, taking control of the government in Russia and later disbanding the elected legislative body at gunpoint. Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin initiates a practical application of Marxist theory. Dealing with social, political, and economic challenges, Lenin implements his own brand of Marxism, diverging from the original ideals of Karl Marx. Leninism embodies the requirement of a vanguard party to awaken revolutionary fervour among the people and adapts Marxist philosophy to relate to a primarily agrarian economy rather than a developed, industrialised system such as Marx had seen in Western Europe.

1867

Das Kapital
The first of Karl Marx's three-volume economic, political, and philosophical treatise *Das Kapital* is published in Germany. It is the only volume published during the author's lifetime. Additional volumes are issued in 1885 and 1894.
1867

1893

Lenin's awakening
Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, son of a prosperous educator and minor noble, moves to the tsarist capital city of Saint Petersburg and, later famous as Lenin, becomes a senior leader within the burgeoning Russian Marxist movement.
1893

1905

Bloody Sunday
A horrific moment in 1905 Revolution results in many deaths as tsarist troops fire on marchers at the Winter Palace in Saint Petersburg. The event facilitates the rise of the Bolshevik Party.
9 (OS) / 22 (NS) January 1905

1924

Stalin's succession
Lenin dies and is succeeded by Joseph Stalin, whom he distrusted. Stalin implements a totalitarian dictatorship rather than party rule as Lenin envisioned. Using terror as a tool of power, he suppresses unrest and purges his perceived political rivals.
21 January 1924

© Alamy

The divide that transformed Russia

Once close political allies, Lenin's unwavering Bolsheviks abandoned their Menshevik comrades with grave consequences for Russia and the world

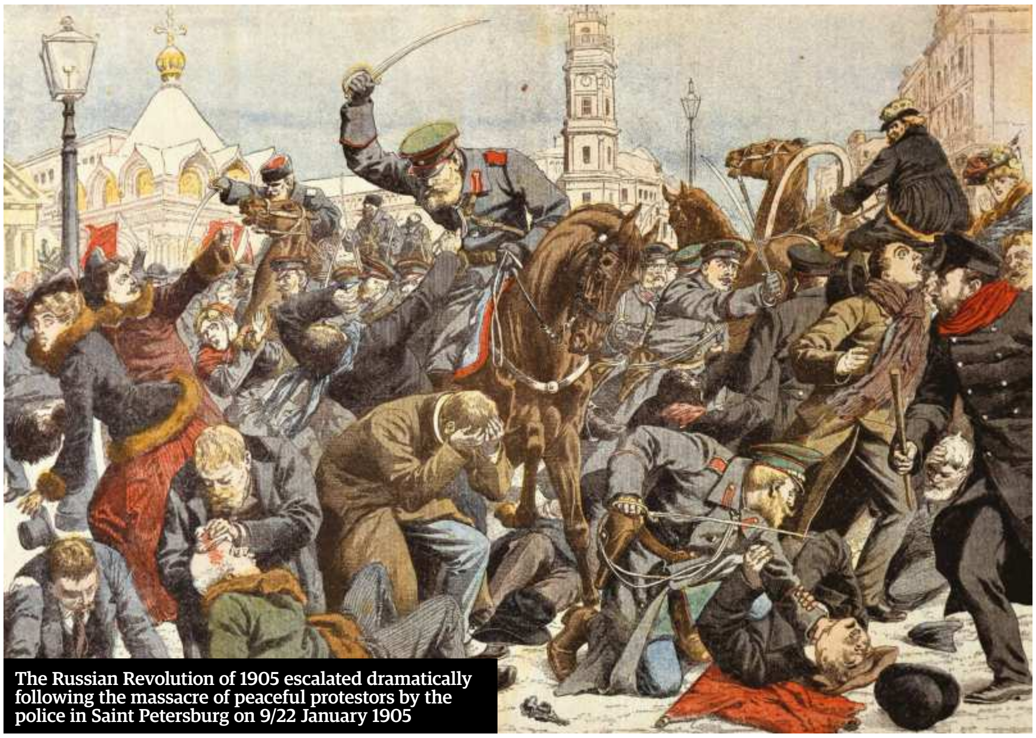
It is often the case that some of history's most pivotal moments have gone unnoticed at the time, either because they don't seem important or because they get lost in a maelstrom of other events. The former is definitely true of the split that broke the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) in 1903.

Founded in March 1898, the Party's members were devout followers of Marxism, a method of socioeconomic analysis created by German philosophers Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels that propagates a view of capitalism exploiting the masses for the benefit of the elites.

The RSDLP held its first congress in Minsk in 1898 but it wasn't a meeting that boded well for those present – within a month, five of the nine delegates were arrested by the secret police. While the Party survived and went on to host its second congress in Brussels and London in the summer, it would be during this gathering that one member, Vladimir Lenin, would make a grab for total power.

Having founded the Party newspaper, *Iskra* ('Spark'), in 1900, Lenin was a passionate believer in Marxism. It would be this unwavering faith that would prove fatal for the Party when he publicly clashed with his ideological rival, Julius Martov. In what would prove to be a series of violent meetings held in Brussels and then London, RSDLP members squabbled over almost every policy, quickly revealing a divide between two emerging factions – the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks.

While not the leaders of their respective groups at the start, Lenin and Martov were such forceful characters that no one else was considered to direct the factions. Although their differences were legion, the fundamental aspects of policy that resulted in the schism between what would become the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks centred largely around how the Party should be formed and led.



The Russian Revolution of 1905 escalated dramatically following the massacre of peaceful protestors by the police in Saint Petersburg on 9/22 January 1905

> "He didn't trust the people to know what was best for them or to deploy themselves in a way that would be best"

Described by Leon Trotsky as the "Hamlet of Democratic Socialism", Martov was a die-hard believer in allowing open and honest debate to flourish in a large, inclusive party that would attract the support of the lower classes. Lenin, however, was a firebrand who was of the belief that the RSDLP needed to comprise a small number of devout members who would be supported by a network of non-party followers. Unlike Martov, he didn't trust the people to know what was best for them or to deploy themselves in a way that would be best – they had to be led by force.

Unable to agree even on the first rule of the Party programme – the exact wording of what defined a Party member – Martov and Lenin's dispute was temporarily settled by a vote on how they should proceed, which Martov won with 28 votes to 23. However, as Martov's backers included seven members who would later abandon him, Lenin was left with the majority ('bol'shinstvo', hence 'Bolsheviks'), forcing Martov to accept his minority ('men'shintvo', or 'Menshevik'). Lenin also managed to get three Mensheviks thrown off the editorial board of the *Iskra*, a move that enraged Martov so much that he quit the board.

Slighted by Lenin's underhand tactics, Martov would have his revenge in October when he unleashed a fierce verbal barrage of a highly personal nature upon Lenin during the Party's Foreign League conference in Geneva. Never really receptive of criticism, Lenin stormed out in a rage.

In a bid to heal the Party's gaping wound, a fellow revolutionary, Georgi Plekhanov, re-established the original *Iskra* editorial board before pleading for Lenin to return. Instead, he was met with Lenin's resignation on 1 November. The future founder of the Soviet Union ended any realistic hopes of a reunion with a warning for Plekhanov: "I am absolutely convinced that you will come to the conclusion that it is impossible to work with the Mensheviks."

Despite Lenin's refusal to negotiate, attempts were made to reunite the two sides in the coming years. While Lenin would only ever consider the prospect if his methods were fully embraced, this didn't prevent the Bolsheviks from meeting in London to vote in favour of mending their broken bond with Martov in April 1905. This was a hollow gesture, though, with Lenin remaining his obstinate self. He called for a final break from the Mensheviks at the meeting when they accused him of deviating from Marxism by inciting violence.

Undaunted, Lenin used his followers to great effect, appealing to the masses with promises to redistribute land to the peasantry and establish workers' unions to improve factory conditions. He also encouraged Party members and the public to unleash further violence, even going so far as to get Russian-Jewish diplomat Leonid Krasin to organise bank robberies for funding. The Bolsheviks' methods were condemned by the Mensheviks at the fourth Party Congress in Stockholm in April 1906, further widening the gulf.

The Bolsheviks would go on to succeed in gaining the support of both the urban and rural people of Russia, the two largest social groups in the country. Their efforts were largely aided by some of the Mensheviks' inexplicable errors of judgement like their decision to back Russia's continued presence in World War I, a deeply unpopular conflict in the country, in 1917.

In the wake of crushing defeats to the Germans at Tannenberg and the Masurian Lakes, a crippling manpower shortage at home, and inflation running at 400 per cent, the Russians were desperate to sue for peace with Germany by the time of the 1917 revolution, something Lenin's Bolsheviks vowed to do. Yet despite being a staunch opponent of the conflict, Martov allied his party with Alexander Kerensky, head of the loathed Provisional Government that supported continuing the war effort. This proved to be another step towards the Mensheviks' isolation, a downward spiral that saw members defect to the Bolsheviks.

Acting quickly and decisively, the Bolsheviks seized power in the wake of the national upheaval and would go on to outlaw Menshevism in 1921, forcing many members to emigrate – including Martov, who headed for Germany. He would die on 4 April 1923, having first witnessed the nightmare he'd warned against unfold. What had begun as an ideological disagreement between friends had set in motion a chain of events that would change the face of the world for decades to come.

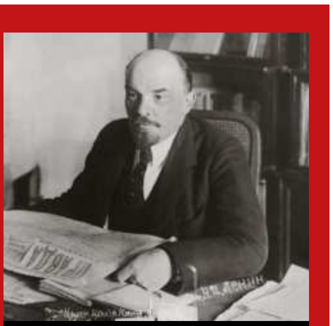
From a spark to a fire

The newspaper that would light up the cause

Founded by Lenin, the *Iskra* newspaper's slogan warned that "from a spark a fire will flare up", and this publication certainly proved helpful in fanning the flames of revolution in Russia.

Due to the oppressive political situation in Russia during the reign of Tsar Nicholas II, Lenin and his colleagues (who included Julius Martov) were forced to publish the paper in exile and then smuggle it into Russia. The first issue was published in Leipzig, Germany, in December 1900, and it proved useful in galvanising the disjointed members of the RSDLP.

Following the split between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in 1903, the newspaper became an organ of the latter, with Martov exploiting his position as editor to relentlessly lambast Lenin and his ideas. But while *Iskra* was the most popular underground newspaper in 50 years, it closed in 1905.



Following his fallout with Martov, Lenin went on to edit *Pravda* ('Truth') , which became a key Bolshevik tool

A KATORGA CAMP

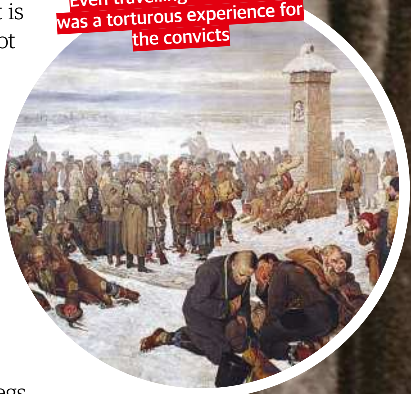
THE SHOCKING TREATMENT OF PRISONERS IN EXILE FROM RUSSIA

SIBERIA, 1754-1917

Under tsarist rule, the Russian government sentenced more than one million criminals and political opponents to exile in Siberia, forcing them to work in remote labour camps under incredibly harsh conditions. As well as putting these undesirable citizens out of sight and mind, this system of penal labour called katorga was also seen as a way of populating and developing new Russian territory. The prisoners provided free labour, building infrastructure and mining resources, with many losing their lives in the process. Following the Russian Revolution, the camps were transformed into Gulag labour camps, where conditions were even worse under Soviet rule.

TRAVEL TO CAMP

After being sentenced to exile in a katorga camp, convicts were required to walk there themselves, a journey that could take between one and three years. It is estimated that about half did not survive the gruelling journey. However, from 1876, convicts were transported by boat, increasing the percentage that reached their destination.



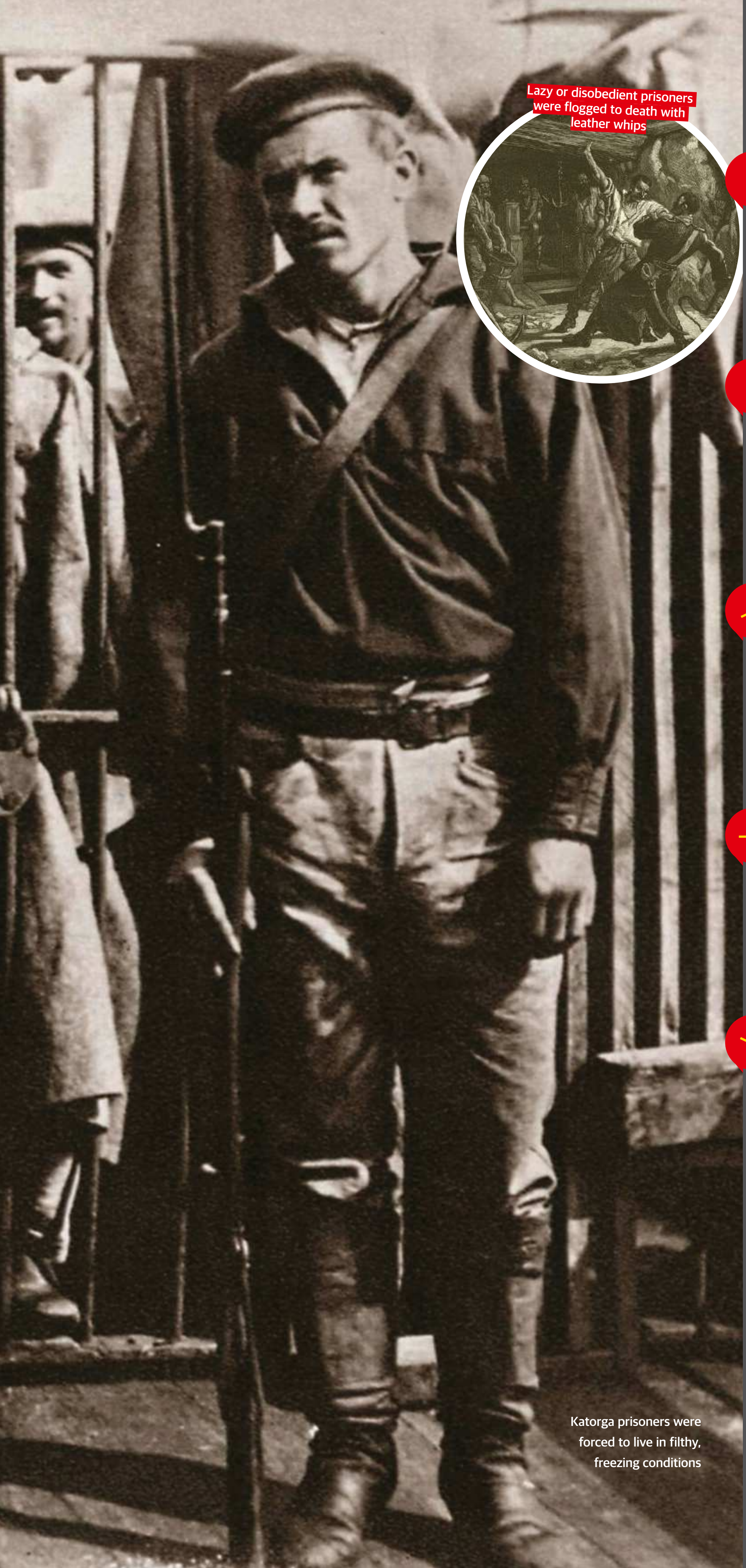
Even travelling to the camp was a torturous experience for the convicts

GET SHACKLED

Upon arrival at the camps, convicts had shackles secured to their ankles, chaining their legs together to stop them from running away. These chains were only removed once their sentence had been completed, but they were usually still forced to continue living and working in Siberia for the remainder of their lives.

START WORK

Prisoners worked for up to 11 hours a day constructing roads and railways, such as the Trans-Siberian Railway, or mining silver, lead and gold. The latter was the most dreaded task of all, as no safety equipment was provided and there was no medical care for those who contracted respiratory problems in the dark and dusty mines.



Lazy or disobedient prisoners were flogged to death with leather whips

Katorga prisoners were forced to live in filthy, freezing conditions

BE PUNISHED

Prisoners who did not work hard enough or disobeyed the guards were often flogged to death with a type of long, leather whip called a knout. Other punishments included being chained up in an underground hole or being forced to drag around a 22-kilogram wooden beam for several years at a time.

PLAN AN ESCAPE

Many prisoners tried to escape the camps, usually with the help of peasants from nearby villages. They would carry them away in boats, carts and sledges, but many either drowned in the rivers or froze to death in the forests while travelling through the vast countryside. Some exiles were entrusted to small villages, and were told if they escaped, every resident would be executed.

EAT SUPPER

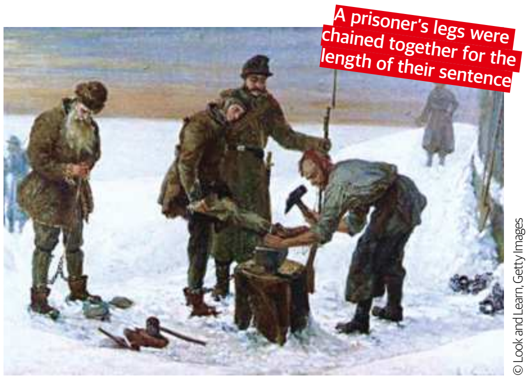
Food for the prisoners was supplied from neighbouring towns and government-contracted food allotments, and consisted mainly of bread, meat, lard and grain. For some of the poorer prisoners, the food was actually more plentiful and of better quality than they would have had at home, and they were even treated to extra portions of beef at Christmas.

TRADE WITH OTHERS

On special occasions, the prisoners sometimes received alms, charitable gifts, from the Russian lower classes who empathised with their meagre living conditions. Typical gifts were bread, vodka, fabric or money, which could be traded with other prisoners, helping some to gain relative importance and financial status within the camp economy.

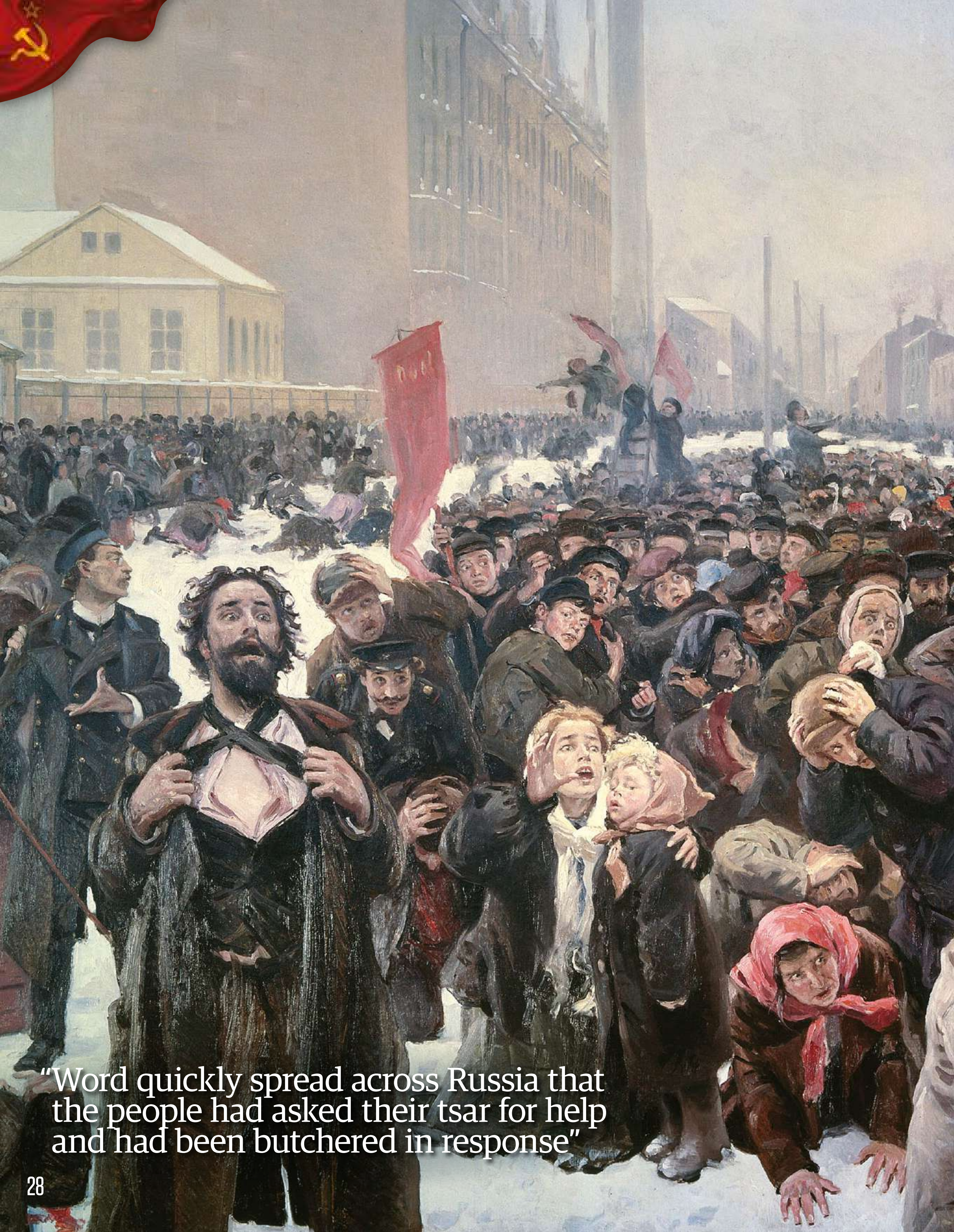
GO TO BED

The cells in the prison camps were damp and freezing cold, particularly in winter when a thick layer of ice would form on the walls, and the straw mattresses would be covered in frost. The only heat came from two stoves in the corridor, and so the prisoners would move their beds closer to them to avoid freezing to death.

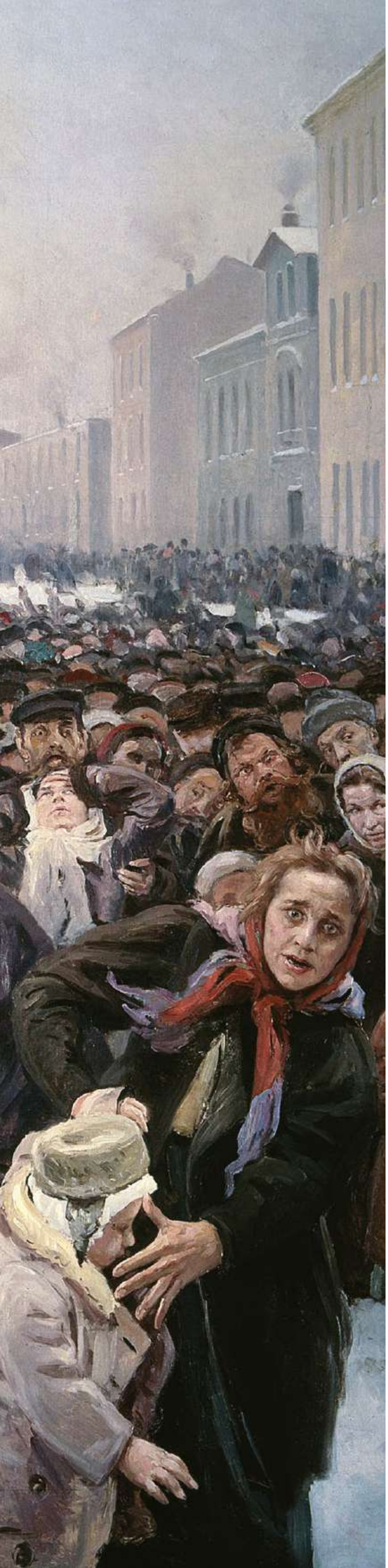


A prisoner's legs were chained together for the length of their sentence

© Look and Learn, Getty Images



“Word quickly spread across Russia that the people had asked their tsar for help and had been butchered in response”



The 1905 Revolution

Blood at the palace gates, mutinies, strikes and military humiliation – 1905's revolution was a year of chaos that led to a weakened tsar finally offering some power to his people

As 1905 began, Tsar Nicholas II was the undisputed ruler of Russia. As he went about supervising seasonal parties, he had little idea that by the time the celebrations came around again, he would have signed away centuries of power and started a series of events that would eventually lead to the end of Russia's monarchy. But the seeds of the 1905 Revolution had already been planted and would bear fruit within days of the new year starting.

Discontent had permeated many layers of society. The growing desperation among some parts of the peasant classes had led to violent disturbances as people discovered that the freedoms brought by the 1861 Emancipation Laws hadn't really changed their lives. The land that peasants were now able to buy often wasn't enough for their needs and there were more and more hungry people looking for food and work.

Many ended up in towns and cities following the decision of finance minister Sergei Witte to promote industrialisation in the 1890s in an attempt to shore up Russia's ailing economy. It had succeeded in part but had brought resentment too, as many workers found themselves enduring long days, low pay and poor conditions.

Government attempts to put down unrest by detaining labour activists caused more resentment, as did the ongoing Russification policies that saw ethnic minorities lose the rights to use their own languages and had led to a series of religious persecutions. Meanwhile, the liberal ideas that had taken hold in universities in the late 19th century continued to flourish, leading to plans in 1904 to try and check growing radicalism.

Around the same time, there had been calls for the monarchy to be changed from absolutist to constitutional. For in Russia, everything came back to the Tsar, who was the 'father' of his people, with all events, good and bad, seen as a reflection of his rule. As 1904 came to an end, Nicholas II had promised to broaden the authority of local municipal councils but had missed more pressing problems in his own back yard.

In December 1904, four men at the Putilov plant in Saint Petersburg lost their jobs and a strike began in support of their plight. It quickly spread across the city. By 8 January (OS) / 21 January (NS) 1905, 120,000 people had stopped work, public areas were closed and there was no electricity.

A priest, Georgy Gapon, organised a march to the Winter Palace to present a list of demands to the tsar, rallying public meetings to his cause. On the morning of 9/22 January he stood at the head of tens of thousands of people making their way to the tsar's residence. Their petition was emotive, addressing Nicholas as 'Sire' and begging for his protection but Nicholas had left for his country home at Tsarskoe Selo.

Instead, the demonstrators were fired on by the military, which turned on marchers across Saint Petersburg. Reports spread that thousands had died, although official estimates are closer to 200. The number didn't really matter. Word quickly spread across Russia that the people had asked their Tsar for help and had been butchered in response.

THE FORGOTTEN REBEL

Georgy Gapon believed he had been sent to help the poor; he was convinced he could persuade the Tsar to improve the lives of workers across Russia with a mass protest. Instead, that demonstration-turned-bloodbath began a year of chaos. Yet the charismatic Gapon is barely known now.

Born Georgy Apollonovich Gapon in 1870, he excelled at school. There, like many of his generation, he encountered Tolstoy's radical teachings but he merged the nascent push for better workers' rights with his religious devotion. He was fast-tracked into the priesthood after initially dropping out of a seminary. When his wife died in 1898, Bishop Ilarion of Poltava helped Gapon start a new life at the prestigious Saint Petersburg Theological Academy.

Gapon became involved in workers' rights and set up a trade union in Saint Petersburg in the early 1900s at the behest of the secret police, attracting over 8,000 members. A powerful public speaker, Gapon preached that the tsar must help his people if they asked him to. But as he watched bodies fall around him on Bloody Sunday, his monarchism disappeared.

Gapon escaped, heading to Geneva and then London. He already knew some members of the Socialist Revolutionary Party and when he returned to Russia in 1906, he tried to recruit some to work with him alongside the police. It sealed his fate. Invited to an isolated house, he disappeared and was found hanged a month later – a quiet end for a forgotten revolutionary.

Once loyal to the Tsar, Gapon organised the event that began 1905's revolution

> "By October, general strikes had taken over nearly all industries and left most major cities at a standstill"

In the weeks that followed, strikes and outbreaks of violence increased as anger Nicholas' regime intensified. The Tsar did nothing – his diaries of the time are peppered with references to the weather with little mention of the unrest that was unfolding across his empire. His new interior minister, Alexander Bulygin, warned him that a revolution was already underway but Nicholas held firm until the violence came closer to home.

In February 1905, his uncle Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich was assassinated just after the end of a 14-year stint as governor of Moscow. On the afternoon of 4/17 February 1905, Ivan Kalyayev of the Socialist Revolutionary Party's Combat detachment hurled a bomb into the grand duke's carriage, killing him instantly. Nicholas was shaken by his death and within hours had signed a document, overseen by Bulygin, that recognised the need for popular input in government, while his interior minister was to draw up plans for a national assembly to do just that.

Nicholas may well have intended for the proposals to act as a stopgap, buying him time while he worked out how to restore order, but he had underestimated the level of popular discontent. Throughout late winter and early spring, strikes and outbreaks of violence continued. Meanwhile, the tsar's reputation as a figure of military might was also under attack. He had poured funds into the Russo-Japanese War, which had begun the year before, increasing tensions among people struggling to make ends meet. In March 1904, the humiliating defeat at Mukden led to 90,000 Russian deaths. In May, the Russian Navy was annihilated at the Battle of Tsushima and Nicholas had to ask the Japanese for peace. Around his empire, there was frustration that such a costly exercise had led to failure while the military forces the tsar relied on so heavily were suddenly hit by pockets of resistance.

The most high-profile was the mutiny on the battleship Potemkin, which began on 14/27 June 1905 when sailors refused to eat rotten rations, and saw one of their leaders shot as a result. The mutineers sailed the ship to Odessa where strikes had turned the port into a tinderbox. Thousands turned out to pay tribute to the dead sailor, while attempts by the authorities to control the crowds led to riots and thousands of deaths. The Tsar now knew he could no longer count on the unquestioning authority of his troops and he needed them now more than ever.

Popular resistance had continued to grow. In May, a Union of Unions was set up, bringing together forces from many industries. A Union of Peasants followed in June 1905. In July, a meeting of zemstvo and town councils took place in Moscow and calls for a representative assembly and improved civil rights continued. In August, Nicholas agreed plans put together by Bulygin that would establish a purely consultative Duma. It was widely rejected and by October, general strikes had taken over nearly all industries and left most major cities at a standstill. The Tsar was surrounded by enemies and they were determined to work together as one.

On 17/30 October 1905, Nicholas II issued the October Manifesto, promising a fully representative, elected Duma that would approve all new laws. There were civil rights promises, too, including

Defining moment

BLOODY SUNDAY 9/22 January

Up to 150,000 people marched to the Winter Palace in Saint Petersburg to present a petition to Nicholas II. The emotive document asked the Tsar for justice and protection but Nicholas was at his country retreat. Soldiers were waiting for the demonstrators and charged as the huge column of people, with women and children at the front, neared the Narva Gates. The military put down pockets of protest across the city – the death toll was put at between 800 and 2,000. Bloody Sunday caused outrage across Russia and set the 1905 Revolution on its course.

The crucial moments of 1905

1905

The Putilov strike

The dismissal of four men at Saint Petersburg's huge Putilov plant in late December 1904 led to strikes that spread across the city in early January 1905. Up to 120,000 workers were involved. Within days, the city had no power or press.

8/21 January

1905

Murder of the tsar's uncle

The revolution came to the Romanovs when a Socialist Revolutionary bomb blew up Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich. His death had a profound impact on Nicholas II, who quickly agreed to popular representation in government for the first time.

4/17 February

1905

Humiliation on the battlefield

The military reputation of the Romanovs was left in tatters when Russia's army finally crumbled at the Battle of Mukden during the Russo-Japanese War. The loss, after three weeks of fighting, caused shockwaves around Europe and weakened the tsar's power.

10/23 March

1905

Obliteration at sea

The crushing sea defeat at the Battle of Tsushima saw two-thirds of the Russian fleet wiped out in just a few hours. Russia had to sue for peace with Japan. Nicholas II was humiliated and resentment spread across Russia.

27-28 May/9-10 June

1905

A united opposition

By May 1905, many professional groups across Russia had formed plans to come together in protest at the Tsar's autocracy and the Union of Unions was born. A Union of Peasants followed in June 1905.

May

Striking workers outside the gates of the Putilov factory in Saint Petersburg. Their protest action sparked events that led to the 1905 Revolution

free speech, a free press and the right to free association. It was widely welcomed, although left-wing groups didn't think it went far enough. Among those demanding more from the Tsar was Nikolay Bauman, a Bolshevik revolutionary who had only just been released from prison. His death at the hands of a monarchist immediately after the Manifesto was published turned this otherwise unsavoury character into a martyr and brought large left-wing crowds onto the streets of Moscow.

Violence lessened as Sergei Witte became chairman of the Council of Ministers and plans were drawn up for elections. However, impatience for change brought fresh opposition. There was a new mutiny, this time in Sevastopol, but it was soon put down. In December, government forces moved against the Saint Petersburg Soviet, set up during the general strike, arresting its leaders. Marxists in Moscow reacted angrily and began an insurrection, but their lack of organisation made military suppression much easier. Over 1,000 people died as a result, but it would be the final act of the 1905 Revolution.

Nicholas II marked the end of 1905 with the same rituals he had carried out 12 months earlier, but even he now realised that much had changed. His reputation as 'father' of Russia was gone, and he would find it impossible to win it back again.

A BLOODY WAKE-UP CALL FOR THE TSAR

It took one man's death for Nicholas II to see that something had to change

It was little wonder that the violent death of his uncle in February 1905 finally shook Tsar Nicholas II enough to realise the threat of revolution. The assassination of Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich was shocking and barbaric, and given the close and complex family ties between the two men, the blow hit Nicholas doubly hard.

Assassins had stalked Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich for several weeks before he was killed on 4/17 February 1905 in his carriage. The bomb thrown at him blew him to pieces. His wife, Elisabeth, heard the blast and ran to the scene where she helped to recover her husband's body. He was so badly dismembered that several of his fingers weren't found until days later. The grand duke had asked to be buried in military uniform but so much damage had been caused that this proved impossible. His remains were laid to rest under a greatcoat instead.

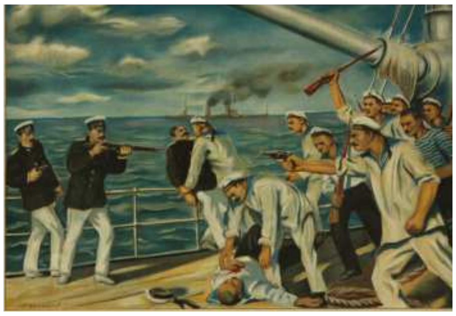
Nicholas had relied heavily on his uncle as a hardline member of his ruling elite – Sergei had been governor of Moscow until just a few weeks earlier and his ruthless policies had won him many enemies. The men were also brothers-in-law and Sergei had been instrumental in arranging the marriage between Nicholas and his own wife's sister, Alexandra. His death shocked Russia and was a wake-up call for the Tsar – albeit a short-lived one.

Defining moment

MUTINY ON THE POTEMKIN

14/27 June

Potemkin's crew rebelled when their leader, Grigory Vakulenchuk, was shot dead during a dispute over rotten provisions. The mutiny killed seven of the ship's 18 officers before the rebels took the boat to Odessa, where striking workers had been at odds with local authorities for weeks. As crowds gathered around Vakulenchuk's body, laid out by the harbour, the military began firing. People jumped into the water trying to escape – up to 2,000 died. Potemkin sailed to Romania where its crew was given refuge. The mutiny failed to spread but the revolutionary anger had now reached the armed forces.



1905

Limited power to the people
The Tsar announced plans for a national Duma with a purely consultative role. The proposal was put together by his interior minister, Alexander Bulygin, and it was greeted with nothing but contempt by the Russian people.
6/19 August

1905

Crippling general strikes
After a summer of protests and violence, a general strike paralysed Russia as it took hold of all major industries, supported by the Union of Unions. A soviet of workers was set up in Saint Petersburg to supervise the strike.
October

Defining moment

THE OCTOBER MANIFESTO 17/30 October

The October Manifesto promised power to people across Russia for the first time, potentially ending the centuries of autocracy that had resulted in revolution throughout 1905. Minister Sergei Witte was instrumental in persuading Tsar Nicholas II to make concessions. The Manifesto promised an elected parliament, the Duma, which would need to approve all future laws. Civil rights, freedom of speech and of the press were also guaranteed. The general strikes began to fizzle out almost immediately. It was loosely welcomed although groups including the Marxists questioned its efficacy.

1905

Creation of a martyr
Bolshevik revolutionary Nikolay Bauman was killed as he protested against the October Manifesto. His violent death turned him into a martyr and huge crowds thronged Moscow for his funeral.
18/31 October

1905

Blood on Moscow's streets
The Moscow insurrection began after the arrest of the leaders of the Saint Petersburg Soviet in early December. Government forces succeeded in putting it down at the cost of more than 1,000 lives.
8/21 December

© Getty Images

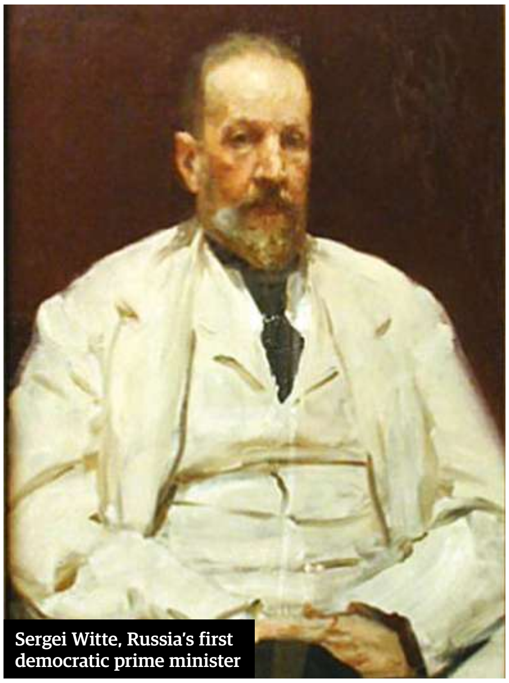
The October Manifesto

In 1905, disorder forced Nicholas II to finally grant his subjects a constitution and an elected parliament. But concessions meant to save the throne actually exacerbated the forces driving Russia to revolution

“I shall never, under any circumstances,” Nicholas II once declared, “agree to a representative form of government, because I consider it harmful to the people God has entrusted to my care.” But events in 1905 forced the tsar’s hand. Defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, Bloody Sunday, strikes and mutinies – by autumn, they had escalated into full-scale revolution. The country was paralysed. With Nicholas confined to his suburban palace at Peterhof, disorder forced him to make concessions to save the imperial throne.

On the evening of 9 October (OS) / 22 October (NS), Sergei Witte, chairman of the Council of Ministers, had an emergency meeting with the tsar. Witte had proved his talents as minister of finance and he had a competent handle on the desperate situation. While he was a confirmed monarchist, he was also a realist – only a dramatic step could save Russia from revolution. He offered Nicholas a memorandum outlining what he saw as the only two ways to save the throne.

The first was to make concessions and open an elected parliament, or Duma, that would have power independent of the Tsar. The second option was to “invest with complete power a responsible person who with unremitting energy might by personal force suppress all manifestations of trouble” – in other words, a dictator who would act under martial law and put an end to the strikes and disorder consuming the empire. Witte made it clear that he favoured the first idea. These concessions, he argued, would satisfy the liberal and moderate reformers while restoring order and ensuring the survival of the Romanovs.



Sergei Witte, Russia’s first democratic prime minister

The Tsar listened without offering an opinion. He viewed all politicians as self-interested gasbags, making no distinction between moderates or revolutionaries when facing challenges to the autocracy. He had been raised to believe that the autocracy was a sacred office ordained by God. Spiritually and temperamentally, Nicholas II couldn’t understand the idea of a sovereign who reigned but did not rule. For him, weakening the very system that had placed him on the throne smacked of heresy.

Faced with growing discontent, he had previously

> “Nikolaevich was ruthless. He openly berated his soldiers on the parade ground using language that made spectators blush and had once sliced a pet dog in half in front of his horrified dinner guests”

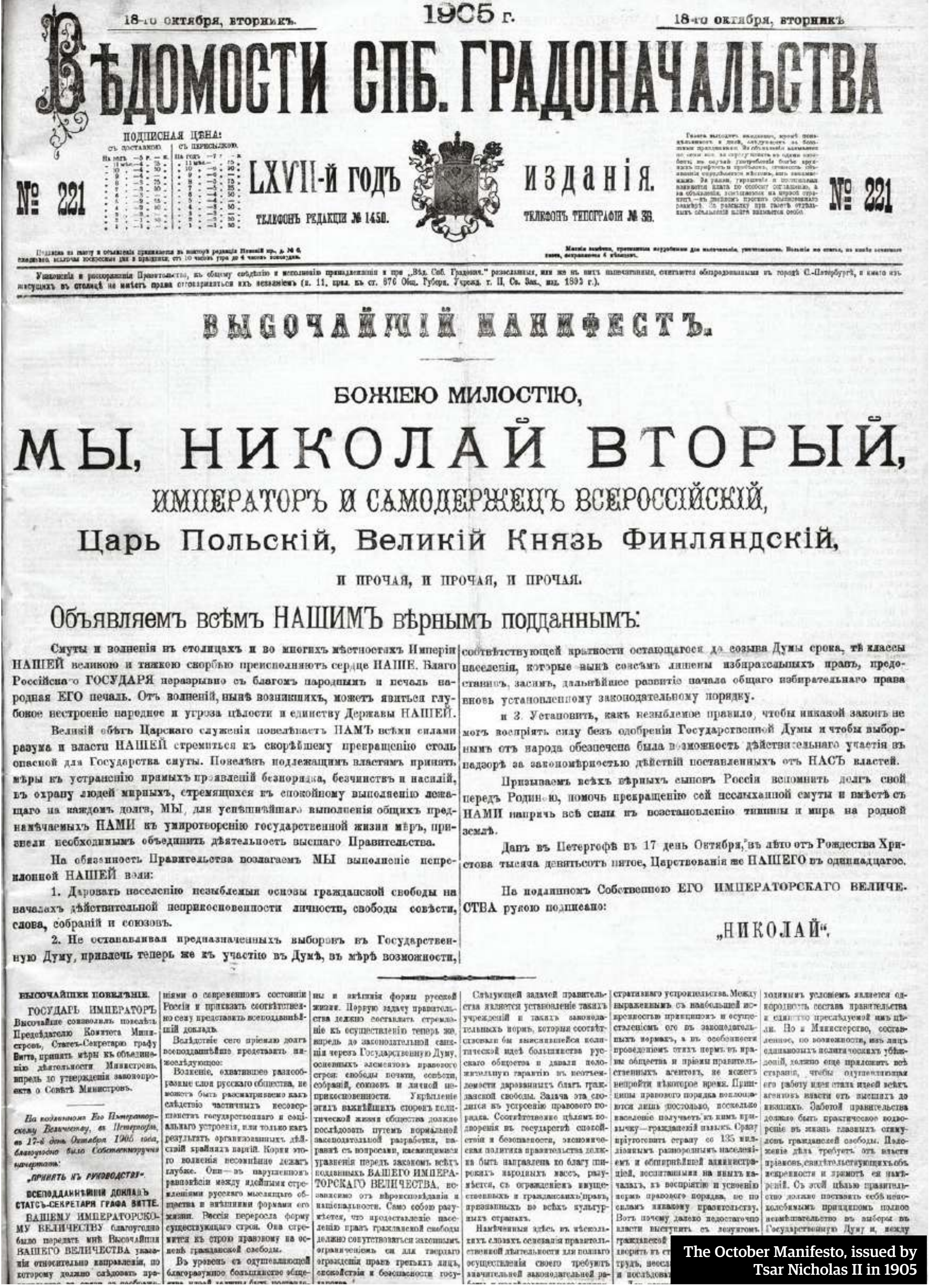
Opening the Duma

How the Tsar launched the parliament he never wanted

Russia’s first Imperial State Duma was formally inaugurated on 27 April/11 May 1906. Nicholas II gave the legislature the magnificent Tauride Palace for their meetings but refused to open the parliament in person. Going to the hated body seemed too painful an acknowledgment of its power, of the concession he had been forced to make.

Instead, the Tsar summoned the newly elected deputies to the Winter Palace, where the trappings of imperial power and majesty were on full display in the throne room. Ladies in elegant gowns and diamond tiaras stood on one side of the room. On the other, members of the Duma, clad in Sunday suits or their peasant best, looked on uneasily as Nicholas urged them to “work for [the] welfare of our land”.

Tauride Palace, the Imperial Duma’s meeting place



18-го октября, вторникъ. 1905 г. 18-го октября, вторникъ.

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БОЖІЕЮ МИЛОСТІЮ,

МЫ, НИКОЛАЙ ВТОРЫЙ,

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Царь Польскій, Великій Князь Финляндскій,

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Объявляемъ всѣмъ НАШИМЪ вѣрнымъ подданнымъ:

Смуты и волненія въ столицахъ и во многихъ мѣстностяхъ Имперіи НАШЕЙ великою и тяжкою скорбью преисполняютъ сердце НАШЕ. Благо Россійскаго ГОСУДАРЯ неразрывно съ благомъ народнымъ и печаль народная ЕГО печаль. Отъ волненій, нынѣ возникшихъ, можетъ явиться глубокое нестроеніе народное и угроза цѣлости и единству Державы НАШЕЙ.

Великій обѣтъ Царскаго служенія повелѣваетъ НАМЪ всѣми силами разума и власти НАШЕЙ стремиться къ скорѣйшему прекращенію столь опасной для Государства смуты. Повелѣвъ подлежащимъ властямъ принять мѣры къ устраненію прямыхъ проявленій безпорядка, безчинствъ и насилій, въ охрану людей мирныхъ, стремящихся къ спокойному выполненію лежащаго на каждомъ долга, МЫ, для успѣшнѣйшаго выполненія общихъ преднамѣчаемыхъ НАМИ къ умиротворенію государственной жизни мѣръ, признали необходимымъ объединить дѣятельность высшаго Правительства.

На обязанность Правительства возлагаемъ МЫ выполненіе непреклонной НАШЕЙ воли:

1. Даровать населенію незыблемыя основы гражданской свободы на началахъ дѣйствительной неприкосновенности личности, свободы совѣсти, слова, собраній и союзовъ.

2. Не останавливая предназначенныхъ выборовъ въ Государственную Думу, привлечь теперь же къ участію въ Думѣ, въ мѣрѣ возможности, соотвѣтствующей краткости остающагося до созыва Думы срока, тѣ классы населенія, которые нынѣ совсѣмъ лишены избирательныхъ правъ, предоставивъ, засимъ, дальнѣйшее развитіе начала общаго избирательнаго права вновь установленному законодательному порядку.

и 3. Установить, какъ незыблемое правило, чтобы никакой законъ не могъ воспріять силу безъ одобренія Государственной Думы и чтобы выборнымъ отъ народа обезпечена была возможность дѣйствительнаго участія въ надзорѣ за закономѣрностью дѣйствій поставленныхъ отъ НАСЪ властей.

Призываемъ всѣхъ вѣрныхъ сыновъ Россіи вспомнить долгъ свой передъ Родиною, помочь прекращенію сей неслыханной смуты и вмѣстѣ съ НАМИ напрячь всѣ силы къ возстановленію тишины и мира на родной землѣ.

Данъ въ Петергофѣ въ 17 день Октября, въ лѣто отъ Рождества Христова тысяча девятьсотъ пятое, Царствованія же НАШЕГО въ одиннадцатое.

На подлинномъ Собственною ЕГО ИМПЕРАТОРСКАГО ВЕЛИЧЕСТВА рукою подписано:

„НИКОЛАЙ".

The October Manifesto, issued by Tsar Nicholas II in 1905

suggested illusory concessions. In December 1904, and again in February and August 1905, he had toyed with granting a consultative Duma with the right to consider legislation but no power to initiate policy, approve laws, or override the tsar's veto. A frustrated minister of the interior had declared, "The government is in a state of war with Russia. All we can do now is build more jails."

The Tsar initially seemed to have favoured Witte's suggestion of a dictator. A few days after receiving him, Nicholas told the governor-general of Saint Petersburg to pave the way for martial law, ordering him to use force to suppress the strikes.

The Tsar wasn't known for his realism but even he recognised that he lacked the necessary will to act as dictator. Instead, his thoughts turned to his distant uncle Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich, who was set to take up an appointment as military commander of the Saint Petersburg District. A tall, strident, military man, he was known to be ruthless. He openly berated his soldiers on the parade ground using language that made spectators blush and had once sliced a pet dog in half in front of his horrified dinner guests to prove that he kept the sharpest sword in the empire. He was the perfect candidate for the role of dictator.

On the evening of 15/28 October, the Tsar summoned Witte and the Grand Duke to a meeting at Peterhof. Somehow, Nikolaevich got wind of the idea to name him dictator. Horrified, he stormed into the palace and pulled out a revolver, waving it in the air and shouting, "If the Tsar does not sign Witte's manifesto granting a constitution, I will blow my brains out!" Never one to fight, Nicholas quickly backed down. He later justified his change of heart, writing that a dictatorship would have plunged Russia into "rivers of blood" and, in the end, the "results would be the same".

It took the Tsar two days to work up the courage to accept Witte's proposal for a constitution and an elected parliament. Depressed and feeling betrayed, he knew it was the end of the autocracy, an unthinkable concession to the revolutionaries. But he lacked the will to fight. On the evening of 17/30 October 1905, he reluctantly signed the manifesto. "My head hurt," he confided to his diary, "and my thoughts were confused. God help us and comfort Russia."

The October Manifesto assured three changes to the government. First, the Tsar granted his subjects civil liberties including personal inviolability, freedom of conscience, speech, assembly and association. Second, it announced that voting rights for and participation in the new parliament were extended to all eligible males.

Finally, Nicholas promised that "no law can become effective without the sanction of the Imperial Duma, and that the people's elected representatives should be guaranteed a real participation in the control over the lawfulness of the authorities appointed by Us". Nicholas ended the document, "We implore all loyal sons of Russia to remember their duty toward their country, to assist in ending the current unprecedented unrest, and together with Us make every effort to restore peace and tranquillity to our native land."

The document ended Russian autocracy. After so many years of repression, it seemed as though the modern era was finally here. Celebrations replaced angry demonstrators in the streets. The press heralded this concession but it didn't take long for reality to set in. The Tsar retained enormous power, undermining any idea that Russia was now under a true constitutional monarchy.

Only Nicholas could create foreign policy, military actions and many government expenditures. He could veto any legislation, had the power to appoint or dismiss government ministers, and retained the right to use "exceptional measures". The tsar could enact new laws without parliamentary approval if the legislature was not in session and could use any emergency to temporarily close the Duma. In this way, he could prorogue parliament, sign a new law and reconvene the legislature – all within the space of a few days.

These remnants of power bolstered Nicholas' convenient but deluded belief that he remained an autocrat. Within a few months, he was insisting that the October Manifesto and the Duma had in no way infringed on what he believed to be his divinely mandated rights. Instead, he rewrote history, claiming that the document had been an imperial gift to the nation, given freely and thus subject to alteration at will.

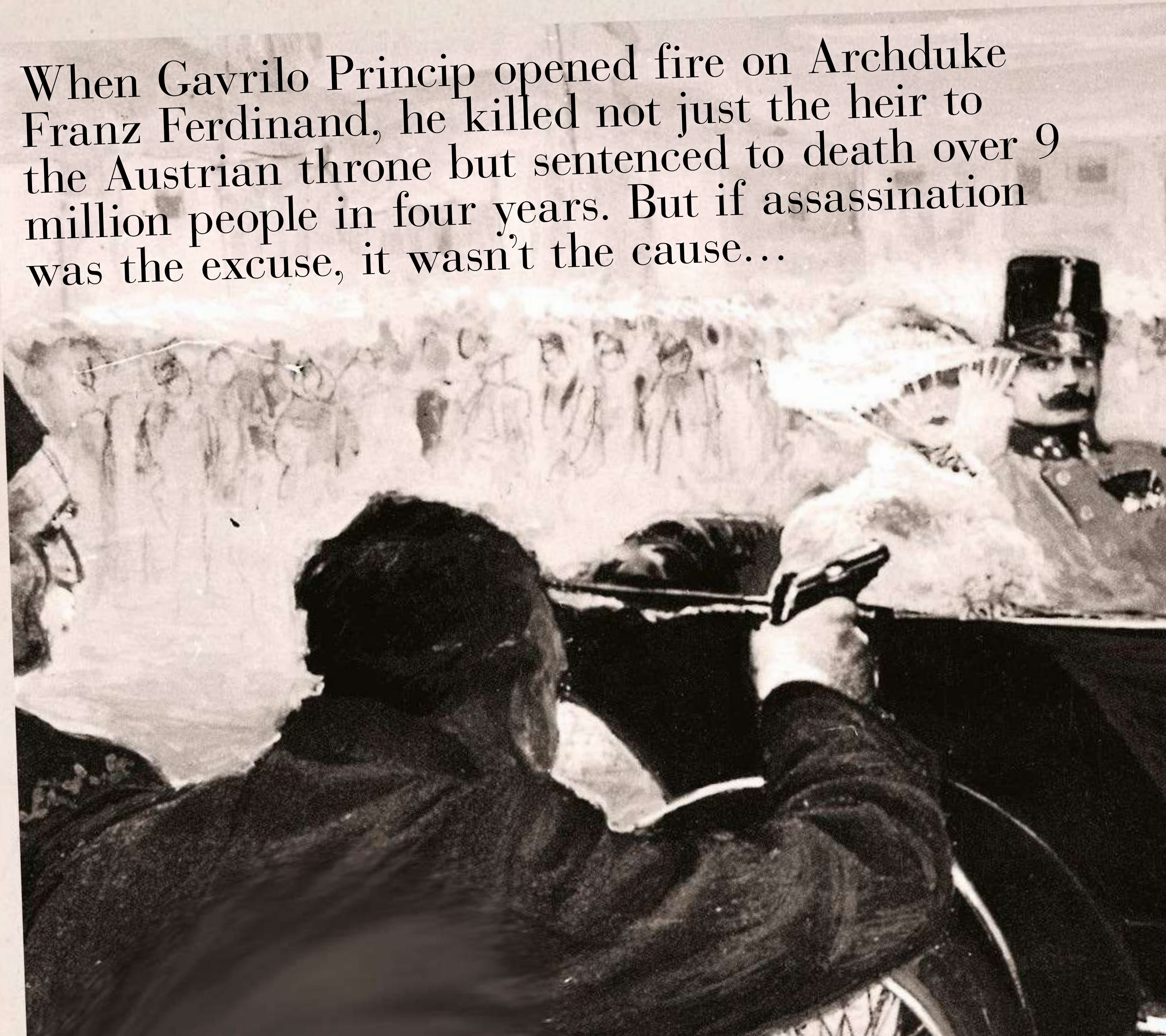
According to this view, the tsar had founded the new legislative system and could therefore alter it whenever and however he liked. This would remain Nicholas II's belief until 1917, when another revolution would finally force the Romanovs off their coveted throne.

28 June 1914

WHAT CAUSED TH

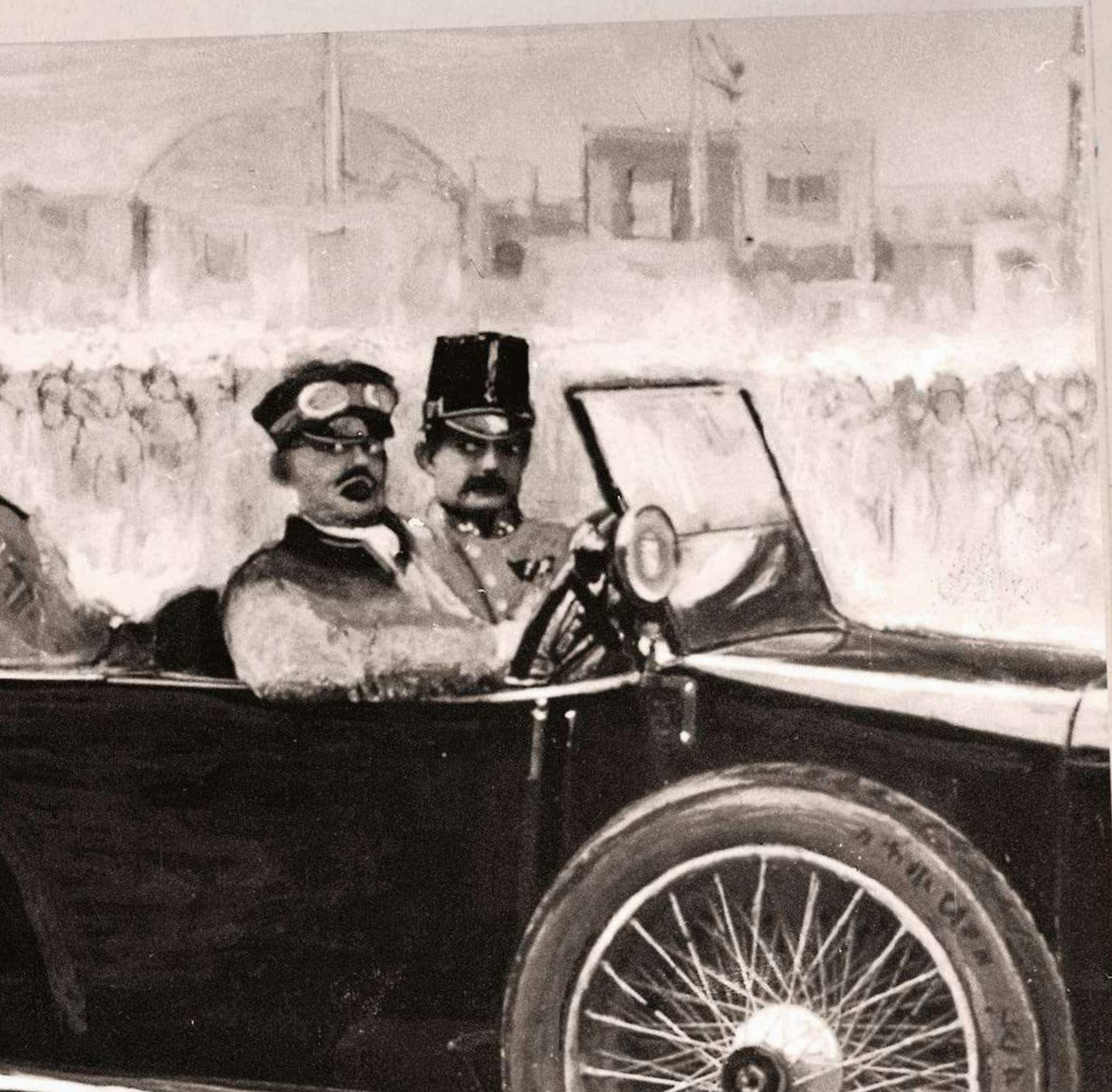
20 defining moments that

When Gavrilo Princip opened fire on Archduke Franz Ferdinand, he killed not just the heir to the Austrian throne but sentenced to death over 9 million people in four years. But if assassination was the excuse, it wasn't the cause…



E GREAT WAR?

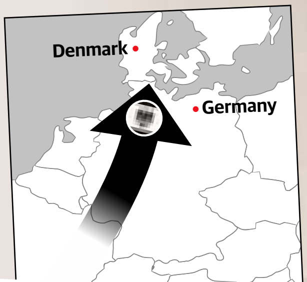
led to World War I



1 February 1864

PRINCE EDWARD NURSES A GRUDGE

British foreign policy is redefined after the Prussian invasion of Denmark



Prussia and Austria's devastating seizure of the ethnically mixed territories of Schleswig and Holstein, which separated Denmark from what is now Germany, shocked the young British Prince Edward - the future King Edward VII - who was only months into his marriage to Alexandra of Denmark. The pair openly supported the Danes in the conflict in spite of an increasingly pro-German Queen Victoria.

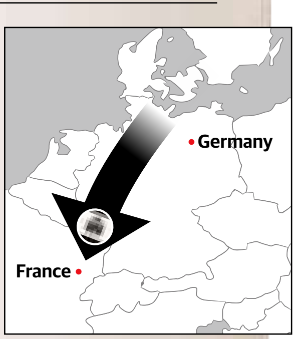
This conflict, the Second Schleswig War - coupled with his cold relationship with his mother - formed the bedrock of Edward VII's foreign policy, and he cultivated a staunchly pro-French and anti-German clique that would survive in government long after his death in 1910. Under Edward VII's influence, the Royal Navy was reformed and modernised to counter the growing German navy, and Britain's aloof isolation slipped away in favour of treaties with France and Russia that would one day become the Triple Entente, dragging the United Kingdom and its empire into war.

Prince Edward VII and his wife Alexandra in 1896

French soldiers in the Franco-Prussian War

19 July 1870

Germany unites at France's expense



Believing "a Franco-Prussian War must take place before a united Germany was formed", Otto von Bismarck goaded France into attacking. The French defeat brought down the Second French Empire of Napoleon III - the monarch was captured along with the remainder of his army - and a vast Prussian occupation of huge swathes of France until war reparations were paid.

This humiliation, along with the annexation of the valuable and heavily industrialised Alsace-Lorraine border region became a huge national tragedy. It remained at the heart of French culture in the run-up to World War I, as foreign affairs revolved around preparing for a new conflict with Germany, and public opinion called for the return of the lost provinces. In the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War, the North German Confederation was dissolved and replaced by a unified German Empire, led by Kaiser Wilhelm I and Chancellor Von Bismarck, while the French Third Republic formed in Paris.

8 February 1867

THE OLD EMPIRE CRASHES DOWN

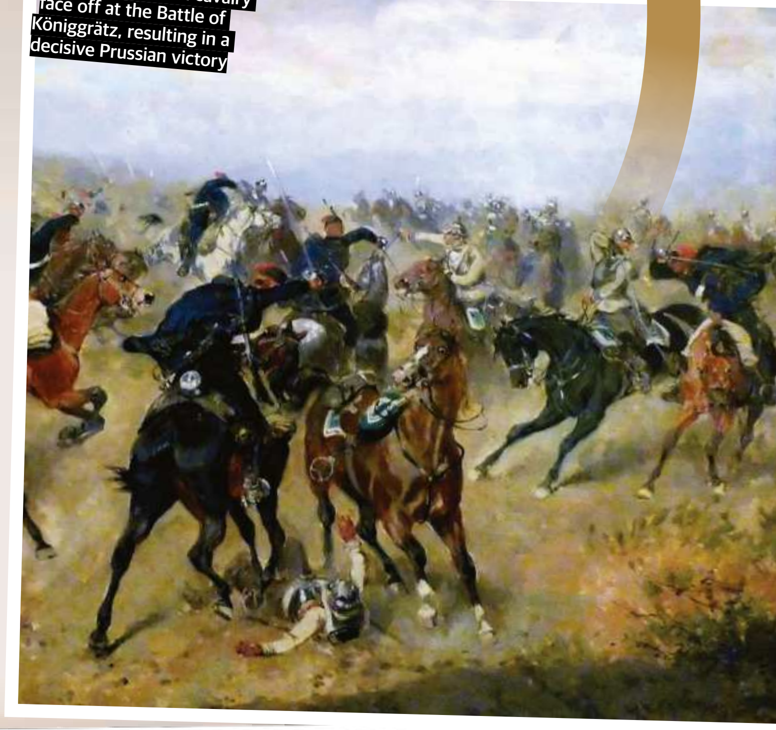
The Dual Monarchy replaces the Austrian Empire

A dispute between the traditional guiding hand of the Germanic states - Austria, whose Habsburg family had ruled since 1278 - and the increasingly powerful Kingdom of Prussia - under Prime Minister Otto von Bismarck and King Wilhelm I - allowed the growing rivalry between the two powers to bubble to the surface in open war.

Left weakened and with Hungary set to break away, the Austrian Empire was dissolved in favour of a cumbersome Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary, in which each state was governed independently and then together by a convoluted system of joint-ministers. This solution to Austria's internal instability in turn created a whole new set of stress points in the vast edifice, including Hungary's oppressive policies towards its non-Hungarian subjects, made them easy prey to Serb and Russian-sponsored agitation that would prove so toxic in Austrian-run Bosnia in 1914.

With Austria's traditional dependencies, the myriad small German principalities, now under the banner of one Prussian-dominated North German Confederation, Austria-Hungary had to look toward the Balkans and the waning Ottoman influence for opportunities to expand.

Prussian and Austrian cavalry face off at the Battle of Königgrätz, resulting in a decisive Prussian victory



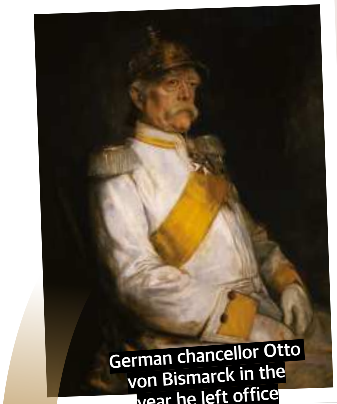
20 March 1890

BISMARCK IS FORCED INTO RETIREMENT

German foreign policy turns belligerent as the Kaiser takes over

Though Otto von Bismarck's role in the birth of the German Empire and a renewed enmity with France left him with a reputation for belligerence, the 'Iron Chancellor' was a stabilising force for central Europe. He kept Germany back from the rush for colonies that would bring it into direct competition with other powers, declaring in 1876 that a war in the Balkans wouldn't be worth "the healthy bones of a single Pomeranian musketeer". He also signed the Reinsurance Treaty with Russia in 1887 that limited their involvement in conflicts with each other.

Wilhelm II succeeded his father, Kaiser Frederick III, with a very different set of priorities and the two clashed constantly, the toxic atmosphere in the court eventually forcing Bismarck to resign in 1890. His replacement - Leo von Caprivi - was far more in step with Wilhelm's vision, fatally letting the Reinsurance Treaty lapse - pushing Russia towards France - in favour of a friendship with Britain that would never come to fruition, leaving Germany isolated in Europe by 1914.


German chancellor Otto von Bismarck in the year he left office

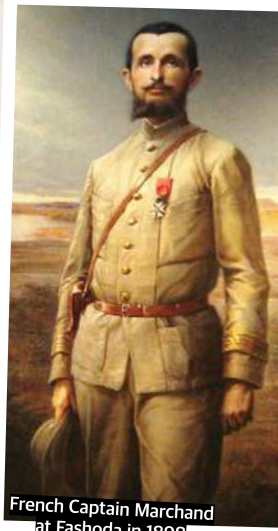
10 July 1898

Britain and France size each other up

The scramble for Africa reached crisis point as France and Britain coveted control of the Nile to link up their African colonies. France especially felt threatened by Britain's occupation of Egypt in 1882 and quickly dispatched a small force to Fashoda (now Kodok in south Sudan) where the lines of both powers' empires intersected.

After a daring 14-month trek across Africa, the French force seized Fashoda on 10 July 1898, however reinforcements turned back, and a flotilla of British gunboats led by imperialism's posterboy, Horatio Herbert Kitchener, arrived at the isolated fort - both sides politely insisting on their right to be there, and rather nobly agreeing to fly British, French and Egyptian flags over the fort in compromise. At home, meanwhile, talk of war gripped both parliaments - only when it looked as though victory would hinge on sea-power, putting the lighter, faster French fleet at the mercy of the heavier British one, did the French withdraw and an official boundary was agreed between the two powers.

The normalisation of British and French relations after the Fashoda Incident, and the clear demarcation of influence, relieved the constant pressure between the two to an extent, setting them off from hundreds of years of semi-regular bloodshed on a new course towards alliance.


French Captain Marchand at Fashoda in 1898

29 December 1895

Germany is warned off in southern Africa

Though the competing British and German interests around what is now South Africa had been a clear flashpoint for decades, the British Cape Colony's failed raid on the independent Transvaal Republic that would eventually lead to the Boer War - though unsanctioned by Britain - received the motherland's firm backing.

Kaiser Wilhelm II drafted a letter of congratulation to Boer president Paul Kruger that was celebrated by the German press and sparked outrage in its British counterparts. Germany's urbane ambassador to London was shocked when the Foreign Office's bullish Sir Francis Bertie informed him that wiping out the German navy would be "child's play for the English fleet".

Very much aware of their limitations, their political isolation and of Britain's overreaction, Wilhelm II resolved to increase the power of the German Imperial Navy and to treat Britain no longer just as a potential ally but also as a potential threat.

Transvaal president Paul Kruger in 1898

4 January 1894

FRANCE AND RUSSIA JOIN FORCES

France and Russia form a military alliance

A less likely love affair would be difficult to imagine: democratic republican France and archaic autocratic imperial Russia cosy up despite public outcry in both countries.

France felt encircled by Britain and Germany who were enjoying a rare cosiness at this point, while likewise Russia saw itself threatened by the British Empire in central Asia, and the Far East, and by Germany's allies Austria-Hungary in Europe.

Where past treaties were agreements between governments designed to keep them from interfering in each other's business, this was primarily a military pact with a guaranteed military response if the other was attacked.

With no room for ambiguity, the Franco-Russian Alliance was the first of many that would bind the military powers of Europe together like mountain climbers, just waiting for one to fall and the rest to go tumbling after.

The Avenue Nicholas II in Paris, named in honour of the Franco-Russian Alliance

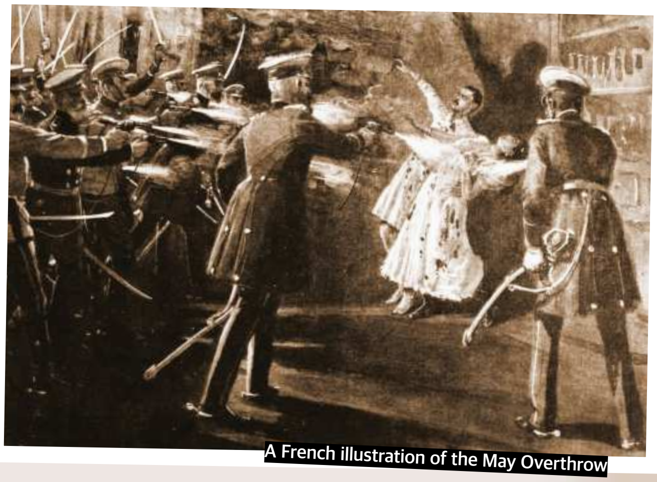
11 June 1903

THE BLACK HAND STRIKES

Austro-Serbian friendship dies with Serb king at hands of secret society

In a scandal that shocked all of Europe, Serbia's deeply unpopular and pro-Austrian king Alexander Obrenović and his wife were murdered by a cabal of army officers who forced their way into the palace and rousted the royal couple from their hiding place.

Perpetrated by the Black Hand, a radical nationalist secret society dedicated to absorbing 'Serb' lands (whether Bosnians, Macedonians or Croatians liked it or not) from the rule of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires, the Black Hand were already so entrenched in Serbia's powerful military that the new government refused all foreign diplomatic pressure to have them arrested for fear they'd be the next rulers to be brutally murdered. One of the key conspirators – Dragutin 'Apis' Dimitrijević – would later become the leader of the Black Hand and Serbia's head of military intelligence – a powerful combination that would allow him to organise a failed attempt on the life of Austro-Hungarian Emperor Franz Josef in 1911, and a more successful and infamous attack on Franz Ferdinand three years later.



A French illustration of the May Overthrow

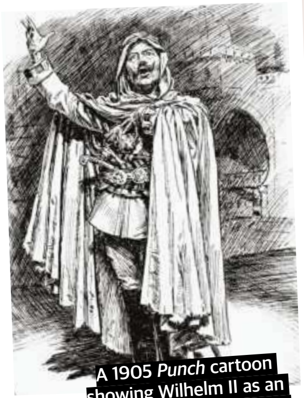
31 March 1905

THE KAISER PAYS A VISIT TO TANGIER

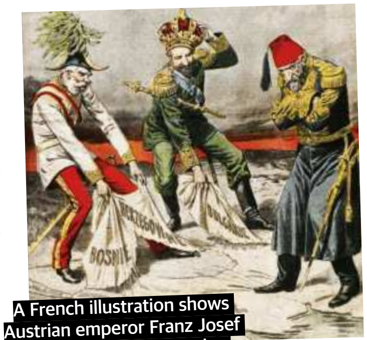
Germany's attempt to drive a wedge between Britain and France fails

Keen to test the extent of France and Britain's Entente Cordiale – signed 8 April 1904 and putting an end to colonial rivalry in Africa and Asia – Wilhelm II arrives in Tangier to deliver a speech in favour of Moroccan independence – much to the chagrin of France, who planned to take over Morocco as a protectorate.

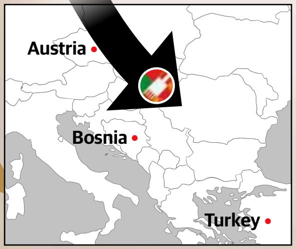
The Kaiser expected to use the ensuing conference to resolve the situation as an opportunity to magnanimously grant France limited control, bringing them closer to Germany and isolating Britain, but to his surprise British foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey, backed the French in the strongest possible terms, and it's Germany that, once again, came away isolated. The Tangier Crisis paved the way for the Agadir Crisis in 1911, which despite higher stakes – a German gunship off the coast, and French and Spanish troop deployments on Morocco's streets – the aims of the Germans were the same, and so were the results: Franco-British military dependency increased, as did the French hold on Morocco and Germany's political encirclement.



A 1905 *Punch* cartoon showing Wilhelm II as an unlikely friend of Morocco



A French illustration shows Austrian emperor Franz Josef tearing Bosnia from Turkey



6 October 1908

Austria takes Bosnia

Austro-Hungarian troops had been in the Ottoman province of Bosnia and Herzegovina since 1878 running it in all but name. In a series of letters and a six-hour secret meeting, Russian foreign minister, Alexander Izvolsky, and Austro-Hungarian foreign minister, Alois Aehrenthal, agreed a revision to the treaty of 1878, allowing Austria-Hungary full control of Bosnia. When the Austrians announced their intent Izvolsky acted as outraged as the rest of Europe's political movers and shakers (but not nearly as outraged as Serbia) and only when Vienna threatened to release secret records proving Izvolsky's duplicity did Russia back down and force Serbia to accept the annexation.

This affair prompted a shift in the direction of Serbian nationalism and public outrage that had so far been more preoccupied with Macedonia and Kosovo. Italy, meanwhile – part of the Triple Alliance with Austria-Hungary and Germany – had been long promised territory on the Croatian coast if Austria were to take Bosnia. Affronted, the Italian government would cite this breach of trust when they joined WWI on the side of the Triple Entente in 1915.

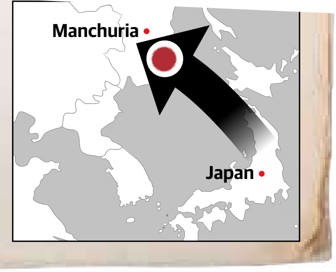
5 September 1905

Japan checks Russian colonialism

Imperial Russia's colonial ambitions in Asia finally overreached themselves, and the Japanese launched a devastating night attack on 8 February 1904 against the fleet anchored at Port Arthur (now Lüshunkou).

This blow to Russia not only brought the Tsarist autocracy to the brink with the Revolution of 1905, but forced Russia to look to the west to expand its influence. The factions in the imperial court fixated on increasing Russia's influence over the Slavic and Orthodox Christian nationalities were strengthened, and foreign policy became increasingly fixated on Bulgaria and Serbia especially. The desire to gain control over the Turkish Straits which would allow the Russian fleet in the Black Sea access to the Mediterranean also grew.

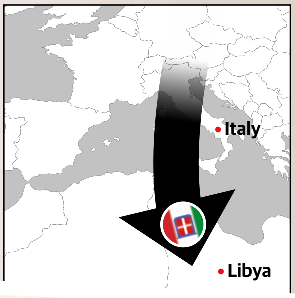
Japanese cavalry crossing the Yalu River into Russian-held Manchuria



29 September 1911

ITALY STARTS A FEEDING FRENZY

Italy invades Libya and kicks off the First Balkan War



Though Britain and France had carved off Egypt and Morocco from the fringes of the Ottoman Empire, Italy's sudden invasion of Libya - one of the empire's central provinces - stunned the world. The superior technology of the Italians and their use of air reconnaissance saw them quickly take key cities before becoming bogged down in guerrilla warfare and counterattacks, while the brutal naval assault on the Dodecanese - the southernmost Greek islands - bloodied the Turks and forced them on the defensive.

While it kicked off a chain reaction (goaded on by the Russian ambassador to Belgrade) in the Balkans that led to the First Balkan War, the Italian seizure of Libya demonstrated a shift in Italy's foreign relations away from its traditional allies. Rather than consult its Triple Alliance partners Germany and Austria-Hungary - both invested in the integrity of the Ottoman Empire - they cleared the campaign with France and Britain beforehand instead.

Italian artillery near Tripoli, Libya, in 1911

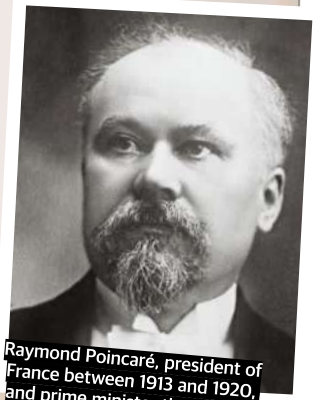
21 January 1912

France votes 'oui' for nationalism

Voted in on a wave of nationalism following the Agadir Crisis in July 1911, hardline anti-German prime minister Raymond Poincaré presided over a lurch to the right. Made president the following year he consolidated control of foreign policy and the Higher Council of War, and dispatched veteran statesman Théophile Delcassé - dubbed "the most dangerous man for Germany in France" by Wilhelm II - as ambassador to Russia to better co-ordinate Franco-Russian military strategy.

As Poincaré's government prepared for war he also made it more likely, telling Russian ambassador, Alexander Izvolsky, that any conflict with Austria-Hungary arising from the First Balkan War would have France's backing.

The hawks in the French government calculated that not only would a war over the Balkans be the surest guarantee that Russia would commit all of its forces to the field, but an Austro-Hungarian invasion of Serbia would bog down the Dual Monarchy, leaving the allies free to tackle Germany.



Raymond Poincaré, president of France between 1913 and 1920, and prime minister three times from 1912 to 1929

12 February 1912

ANGLO-GERMAN ARMS TALKS SINK

Negotiations for a cap on boat building are rejected

With both powers exhausted by boat-building fever that had formed the backbone of Britain's national self-esteem and the key German status as its equal, the war secretary, Richard Haldane, paid a secret visit to Berlin to try and halt the escalation.

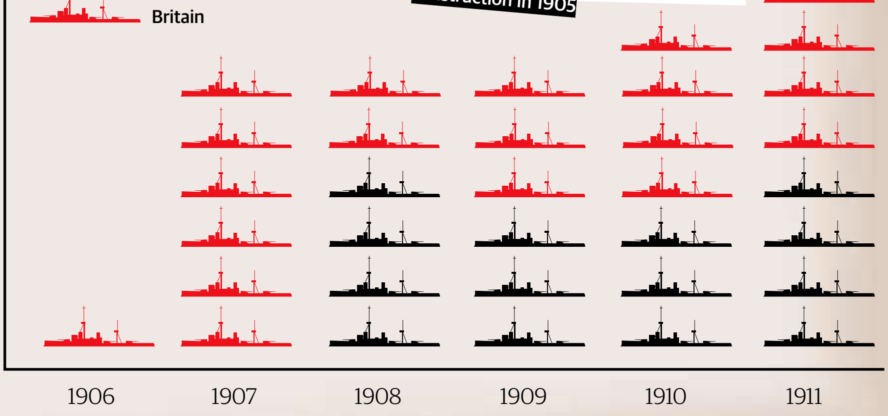
The balance of national egos was simply too fragile. Germany wanted a guarantee of British neutrality in any future conflict, and Britain saw its own naval superiority as something they didn't have magnanimously gifted by Germany in exchange.

As a result, Haldane returned empty handed, the naval buildup continued unabated and, more importantly, Germany pushed Britain further into a military death-grip with Russia and France.

HMS Dreadnought under construction in 1905

THE NAVAL ARMS RACE

Battle cruisers built per year



30 September 1912

RUSSIA FLEXES ITS MILITARY MUSCLE

As the First Balkan War gets underway, Russia points its guns towards Austria

With the Balkan League of Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Montenegro gearing up to snatch territory from the Ottoman Turks in the wake of Italy's invasion of Ottoman-held Libya the year before, their great protector - Russia - made its stance clear.

If Austria-Hungary was alarmed by this potential shakeup of the borders, the rapid mobilisation of 50,000-60,000 Russian reservists along the Polish border with Austria-Hungary alarmed them more. This was the first major aggressive move by Russia against its rivals, breaking with the tradition of covert deal-breaking that would foreshadow the events of 1914, and the robust defence of Serbia that would swallow much of the planet in war.

Russian foreign minister, Sergei Sazonov, observed that were it to come to conflict, "We can probably rely on the real support of France and England."

Sergei Sazonov, Russian foreign minister from 1910 to 1916

14 December 1913

Constantinople looks to Germany

Russia's lust for the Turkish Straits may have been pushed to second place during the Balkan wars, but they hadn't lost sight of their long-term goal. The arrival of Otto Liman von Sanders' German military mission on 14 December 1913 to train and command the first corps of the Ottoman army following humiliating Turkish defeats in the Balkans gave them even greater cause for concern than the presence of a British admiral doing the same job with the Ottoman navy.

Though Germany compromised heavily to keep the diplomatic crisis from boiling over (which in turn left the Germans with a sense of resentment), Russia's lack of backing from even the ardently anti-German Delcassé was a potent reminder to Russia that, despite the Triple Entente, its allies had very different priorities.

Viewing for the first time Germany, and not just Austria-Hungary, as a direct threat to Russia's aims, they realised that the only way they could gain control of the Turkish Straits would be against the backdrop of a wider European war, in which France and especially Britain were bound to Russia.

Liman von Sanders pictured with his Ottoman staff officers in 1914

17 October 1913

SERBIA DIGS IN OVER ALBANIA

The Second Balkan War teaches Austria the value of brute force

The success of the Balkan League in the First Balkan War alarmed Austria-Hungary no end. Now the Second Balkan War had begun, with each combatant eager to consolidate its gains. Serbia - the chief cause of their anxiety - had won crushing victories in Macedonia and then marched into Albania and Kosovo to hold vast swathes of territory. Reports of massacres followed, and even rumours that the Austro-Hungarian consul in Prizren, Kosovo, had been abducted and castrated.

Alternately claiming ignorance of any occupation and then lying about withdrawal, Austria-Hungary grew convinced that Serbia couldn't be bargained with and would only respond to force. On 17 October 1913, Austria-Hungary gave Serbia eight days to leave the contested territory or they would face military action, and Russia advised them to do as they were told. By 26 October Albania was free of Serbian troops and the success of the Albanian ultimatum - and the demonstration of a clear limit to Russia's support - would lead Vienna to try and repeat the performance in 1914, with very different consequences.

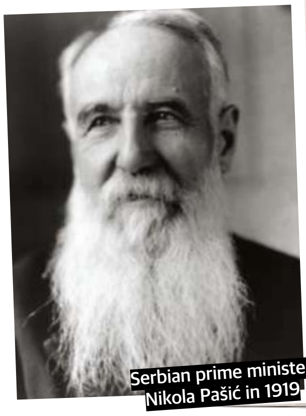
Serbian soldiers in Macedonia during the Second Balkan War

21 June 1914

SERBIA ISSUES AN OPAQUE WARNING

Serbian prime minister fails to warn of plot against Franz Ferdinand

In June 1914, the Serbian prime minister, Nikola Pašić, sent a telegram to the Serbian legation in Vienna warning of a plot against Franz Ferdinand. Belgrade's man in Vienna, Jovan Jovanović, then met with the Austro-Hungarian finance minister on 21 June 1914 to warn in the vaguest terms that a visit by the Archduke could end in tragedy. That Pašić didn't communicate the threat directly to the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister, instead choosing the ultra-nationalist Jovanović – who is rumoured to have commanded guerrilla bands in Bosnia after annexation – who could be relied upon to tell someone further from decision making and probably tell them as unconvincingly as possible, suggests that this might have been a warning Pašić felt he needed to be seen to issue, but didn't necessarily want to be heard.


Serbian prime minister Nikola Pašić in 1919

28 June 1914

Ferdinand is assassinated

On 28 June 1914 the Archduke Franz Ferdinand – nephew and heir to Emperor Franz Josef of Austria-Hungary – along with his wife – Duchess Sophie – were shot and killed while inspecting the troops in the Bosnian capital, Sarajevo. The man pulling the trigger was radicalised Bosnian-Serb student, Gavrilo Princip – an assassin from the secret military society, the Black Hand, which was equipped and supported by conspirators within the Serbian army.

Though unpopular, the Archduke's death provided all the pretext the Habsburg court needed to curtail the belligerent Serbia. Beyond the excuse it provided, Franz Ferdinand was the leader of a think-tank within the Austro-Hungarian military that advocated reorganising the empire along federal lines.

A more representative Austria-Hungary could have silenced demands for independence from the Slavic communities in the empire – many of whom were still relatively loyal to Franz Josef himself, just critical of the state – loosening Serbia's influence in Croatia and Bosnia. It also would have undermined Russia's self-proclaimed mission to 'protect' the Slavic and Orthodox Christian people. But it was never to be.

Gavrilo Princip arrested by Austro-Hungarian police shortly after the shooting

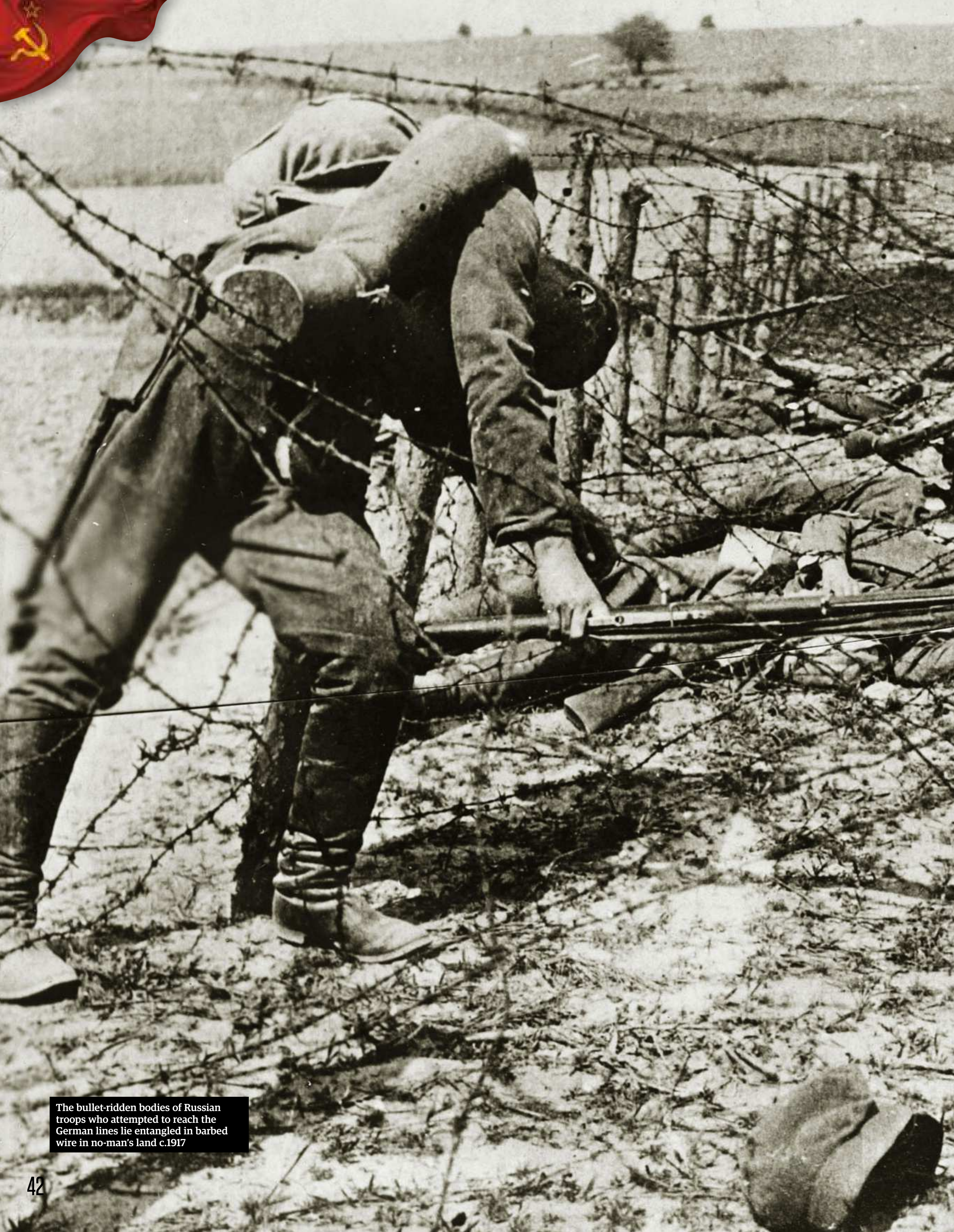
23 July 1914

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY DECLARES WAR!

Political alliances lead to domino-effect war

Concerned that public opinion would not back war, the Austro-Hungarian government – champing at the bit to knock the Balkan upstart down a peg or two since 1912 – prepared an ultimatum that would be near impossible for Serbia to accept. Wilhelm II in Berlin voiced his support for Austria-Hungary, advising the German ambassador to Vienna, "We must finish with the Serbs, quickly. Now or never!" Indeed the conditions were too humiliating for Serbia to agree to and, on 28 July 1914, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. Like a chain of dominos tumbling in succession Russia, Germany, France, Britain and all their overseas dominions were plunged into war. Italy, the Ottoman Empire, Japan and eventually the US would follow, as World War I progressed.

German trenches on the Aisne River during World War I



The bullet-ridden bodies of Russian troops who attempted to reach the German lines lie entangled in barbed wire in no-man's land c.1917

Eastern Front 1917

Grave of Russia's Imperial Army

It saw the most casualties in WWI, yet the Eastern Front is often overlooked, subsumed in the narrative of revolution and civil war

It was a Pyrrhic victory with nearly one million casualties, half of these lying dead on the battlefield, yet Russia's high watermark on the Eastern Front in WWI came with a savage battle against Austria-Hungary in Carpathia, which almost knocked the latter out of the war.

The Brusilov Offensive - the only campaign of the Great War named after an individual, Aleksei Brusilov - was fought between June and September 1916, and saw the eponymous general almost pulling off the spectacular, only to be thwarted by a combination of Austria-Hungary's allies bailing them out and Romania proving to be a weak cog. Instead of anchoring the Russian line in the south, the Romanian rout resulted in a general retreat, a collapsing situation only saved by the onset of winter. This could have been the fulfilment of Russian chief-of-staff General Mikhail Alekseev's vision, at the start of 1916, that a concerted effort could knock Austria-Hungary out of the war.

The combination of the summer losses and morale-sap of Russian divisions being sent into Romania to stem the Central Powers' advance there, proved too much for the Imperial Russian Army. If there was a moment when the collective Russian will was broken, it was here; a near triumph that turned into another debilitating setback. Ironically, the Russians had cultivated Romania, believing it would be an asset in any Galician campaign; it proved to be anything but.

Significantly in October 1916, small anti-war incidents began to occur in some Russian corps, and Maurice Paleologue, the French ambassador to the court of Russian Tsar Nicholas II, reported that, "… war-weariness and food shortages caused disorders throughout many Russian cities in the autumn of 1916. They were the heralds of the Revolution of 1917." Factories in Petrograd went on strike and when French Renault workers tried to continue working, they were set upon by strikers. The police called in the infantry, who sided with the strikers, leaving the Cossacks to restore order.

When war had first broken out, Russia, in common with other belligerents, optimistically believed it would be brief and victorious. For this reason, Russia failed to factor in how material and human replacements for those expended would be produced and deployed. A lack of ammunition would soon hit crisis point.

Unlike the industrial nations, the country did not have a reserve of manufacturing that could be turned over to war production, or an effective bureaucracy to co-ordinate the effort. As well as (mostly) incompetent officers, the Russians suffered from a lack of everything – particularly artillery – required to wage a modern war. The only thing it had in abundance was manpower. A Russian division in 1914 numbered in the region of 15,000 men. Upon mobilisation, Russia's army totalled 115 infantry and 38 cavalry divisions (around 2,300,000 men), but with only around 8,000 artillery pieces. The difficulty the Russians faced with such an extensive front and so many opponents was illustrated by fewer than 30 per cent of its available divisions lining up against the Germans in the north.

With the war going badly and unrest increasing, Nicholas II may have regretted his decision of September 1915 to relieve Grand Duke Nicholas Nicolaievich of supreme command. The Tsar had taken over at this point, ignoring warnings that he could not be both soldier and statesman.

Although he proposed to act only as a figurehead with Mikhail Alekseyev controlling the army, his name would nevertheless become indelibly linked with failure, as illustrated by recriminations following the heavy losses sustained at the Battle of Lake Naroch in March-April 1916, an inconclusive Russian offensive aimed solely at relieving the pressure of the Germans at Verdun. As General Aleksandr Noskoff lamented, "Our losses were very high, numbering some 250,000. The sacrifices resulted from the personal intervention of Emperor Nicholas II." His absences at the front also meant that a clique, centred round the Germanic Tsarina and the mystic-healer-meddler Rasputin, were in effective control of the government, further fuelling the amorphous discontent.

As 1916 drew to its miserable conclusion, more than a dozen regiments mutinied, with soldiers reported to be deserting in their thousands every single day. The Tsar appeared incapable of controlling either the army or the government, and even the largely unlamented murder of Rasputin cured little, suggesting instead that Russia was descending into a state of near-anarchy.

With Christmas approaching, the Russian military effort switched to the north, with an offensive planned by the Russian 12th Army (Northern Front) and Latvian units in the area of Jelgava (Latvia). Having failed to break the Austro-Hungarians, the Russians were going to have another ill-advised crack at the Germans, under General Radko Dimitriev. World War I was a war of alliances and it was often the case for Russia that it launched an offensive due to pressure from the other Entente members. The so-called 'Christmas Battles' of late-December 1916 were a case in point. The order to attack the German 8th Army on the Riga front was given in order to attract German reserve forces, thereby relieving the pressure on the French at Verdun (Brusilov had suffered in the same way with his summer offensive, when his attack went in earlier than he'd wanted because of Italian appeals to distract the Austrians in Trentino).

The 8th Army had been held up near Riga for more than a year since October 1915, digging itself in thereafter and fortifying a 30-kilometre-long 'wall' – the grandiloquently-dubbed German Wall – constructed largely from wood and sand, which lay waiting for the Russians. The wall was built across the Tirelpurvs (or Tirelis Swamp), so was a potential nightmare for any force brave, or stupid, enough to try to take it. Mid-December saw a fall in temperature to an eye-watering (or eye-freezing) -35°C, however, it enabled the now-frozen swamp to be crossed, and the German fortifications could now be assaulted.

Determined to surprise their enemy, the Russians planned the attack for 23 December, believing

> "The Tsar had taken over at this point, ignoring warnings that he could not be both fighting soldier and statesman"

Russian infantry being mobilised shortly before the outbreak of war. Many would lose their life in the ensuing carnage

Foes of the motherland

Nicholas II faced an almost impossible task opposing multiple nations hungry for victory

WWI's Eastern Front was never as simple as Russians and Germans going hammer and tongs. When Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, Russia was duty-bound to defend her Slavic ally. In addition, Russia faced a militaristic Germany, which honoured its alliance with Austria-Hungary. So the Russians waged war over a 1,600-kilometre-front that stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea, encompassing both Germany and Austria-Hungary. If that was not enough, Turkey joined the Central Powers later in 1914, giving the Russians a third opponent from November. Three became four in September 1915, when Bulgaria threw in its lot with the Central Powers. Still smarting from defeat by Serbia in the Second Balkan War, Bulgaria saw a way of recovering its losses, especially with Serbia's protector, Russia, getting pummelled elsewhere. As the 1916 campaigning season dawned, Nicholas II saw enemies around every corner, and we haven't even mentioned the Polish Legions.

Germany

While Russia always squared up well to Austria-Hungary, it found Germany a different proposition and the final blow came in August-September 1914, with crushing defeats at Tannenberg and the First Battle of the Masurian Lakes. Germany's Schlieffen Plan failed, however, which left it fighting a war on two fronts and unable to field sufficient divisions in the east to defeat Russia. The Russian territory proved too big for Germany's army, a problem many commanders had come up against before and would struggle with in later years too.

Turkey

Turkey joined the Central Powers in August 1914 and two months later its warships bombed Russia's Black Sea Coast. Russia's offensives against the Turks occurred in two theatres, Western Persia and Armenia. In January 1915, Russia appealed to Britain for a diversion to relieve the pressure on them in the Caucasus; one of the reasons behind the ill-fated Dardanelles campaign. Russia had the upper-hand in late 1916/early 1917, but the Revolution saw it start to withdraw from Western Persia.

Bulgaria

Bulgaria's defeat at the hands of Serbia and Greece in 1913 left it thirsting for revenge. Initially neutral, Bulgaria joined the Central Powers in September 1915, sensing an opportunity to achieve its ambition of a Greater Bulgaria, which would include the Serbian territory of Macedonia. Bulgaria would quickly declare war on Serbia. During 1916, Bulgaria attacked Greece and then Romania, which had sided with the Allies. Bulgarian troops advanced into Dobruja in August where they were opposed by Romanian and Russian troops, leading to further conflict.

Polish Legions

Poland did not exist as an independent state during WWI, Polish 'territory' was instead split between Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia. The Poles looked to support the likely winners, gaining concessions and a promise of future autonomy in return for loyalty and recruits. Colonel Józef Piłsudski (the future Polish chief-of-state) foresaw the war ruining all three empires and chose the Central Powers as his bedfellows, forming the Polish Legions to fight Russia. The Brusilov Offensive saw Austria-Hungary's Polish Legions defying Russia at the Battle of Kostiuchnówka, one of the bloodiest battles they fought.

Austria-Hungary

The moribund dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary facing Russia throughout the war offered the Russians their best chance of success. Unfortunately, the knock-out blow eluded them, partly due to Russian failings and partly due to the Germans' formidable clout entering the ring at just the right moment. This is well-illustrated by the Brusilov Offensive of June-September 1916, which came close to knocking Austria-Hungary out of the war, until 15 German divisions arrived from the west to put an end to the nonsense.

"As 1916 drew to its miserable conclusion, more than a dozen regiments mutinied"

Two of the Russian guns captured by the Germans at the Swedish-built fortress of Dunamunde, Riga (now in Latvia), c.1917

Damaged buildings in Riga, the capital city of Latvia, following its capture by the German Eighth Army

Crammed into a rear guard trench, Russian infantry await a German offensive

that so close to Christmas, the Germans would be off-guard. The ultimate objective was Jelgava (or Mitau), a rail and road junction south-west of Riga, in central Latvia. The main assault force would be VI Siberian Rifle Corps, which included two Latvian rifle brigades.

The attack duly began early that morning. As well as the surprise of the season, there was also no artillery support, which would have given the Germans advanced warning of an impending attack. By comparison, the received wisdom on the Western Front dictated a frontal assault proceeded by a huge, usually ineffective, barrage.

Sadly for the Russians, after all this planning, the attack stalled as the Germans fed in reinforcements and everything that could go wrong, did. The 17th Siberian Regiment refused to attack, a mutiny supported by several other units, and then, with the offensive faltering, the Germans counter-attacked. A further Russian attack on Christmas Day itself took a fortified hill (later known as Machine Gun Hill) on the northern side of the swamp, but the commander failed to anticipate this success, so the victory could not be exploited. By 29 December, the Russian attempt on the German Wall had petered out; another indecisive battle and another instance of what might have been for the Russians.

The following month saw an 8th Army counterattack, and in the conventional manner, with an artillery barrage preceding an infantry attack. Latvians and Siberians defended their positions for three days, but Russian attempts to counterattack failed, so the Germans recovered 80 per cent of the ground they had lost, although Machine Gun Hill remained in Russian hands.

With temperatures dropping further to -38°C, the fighting stopped, with both sides literally at a frozen standstill. The Latvian rifle brigades suffered around 8,000 of the Russian losses of some 13,000, the heavy casualties fostering further discontent against Russian generals and the Tsar, who was nominally in charge of this debacle. Siberians who had refused to fight were punished, some paying with their lives, others, ironically, carted off to Siberia. Meanwhile, support for the Bolsheviks rose.

The Christmas Battles, fought over the winter of 1916-17, were almost a microcosm of the Eastern Front as a whole, with the two combatants fighting to an exhausted standoff. While they considered what to do next, the strategists increasingly viewed the Eastern Front as a sideshow to what was going on further west. For both sides, however, it remained important. Just the fact it was there, and unresolved, meant the Germans could not transfer large numbers of troops west.

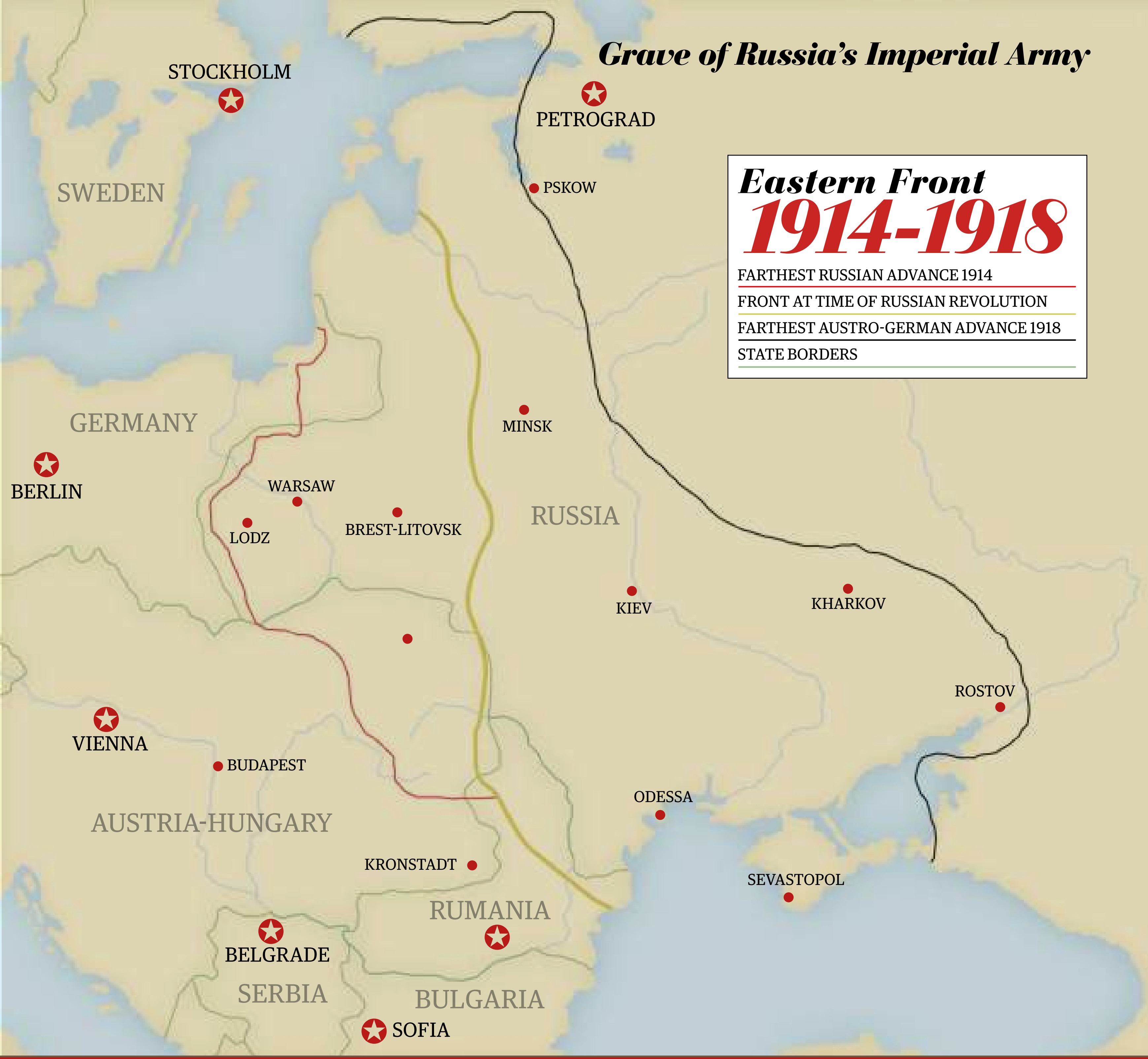
After the initial optimism and enthusiasm for war, marked by an intensity of hatred towards all things German and a love of Mother Russia and its tsar, the nation was fast tracking towards Revolution, civil war and the Bolshevik consolidation of power. That glorious autumn of 1914, when everything appeared possible, seemed an awfully long way off now. The loyalist days, when the German embassy in Saint Petersburg was trashed and the German-sounding city was renamed Petrograd, seemed otherworldly. In those days, there had been no defeatism (unlike at the time of the Russo-Japanese War of 1905), just a steady determination to fight and a belief in ultimate victory, with the sidelining of anything that might interfere. Former Prime Minister Count Sergei Witte had been one of the few prescient souls predicting that war would inevitably bring revolution. With the failure of the Christmas Battles, plotters circled like crows around carrion.

The Russians may have been failing militarily, but it would be wrong to view their efforts as simply inept, with callous leaders and generals sending ill-equipped cannon-fodder to its collective death, as has often been depicted. Winston Churchill showed an understanding of the Russian psyche. "Withdrawn into their own country [the Russians] can hold their own," which was particularly true once the Germans went beyond the railway communications, which they relied on for supply and mobility. The Lord Chamberlain, Lord Sandhurst's view that Russia at this time was, "good for nothing, or worse," was quite wide of the mark.

The inspired common-sense of Brusilov is a case in point. His summer 1916 offensive showed tactical nous that is often overlooked. The offensive was over a much larger front than previous Russian attacks, with offensives staged in many places up and down the front to confuse the enemy. This was in stark contrast to previous attacks, which targeted

> "That glorious autumn of 1914, when everything appeared possible, seemed an awfully long way off now"

Grave of Russia's Imperial Army


Eastern Front
1914-1918
FARTHEST RUSSIAN ADVANCE 1914
FRONT AT TIME OF RUSSIAN REVOLUTION
FARTHEST AUSTRO-GERMAN ADVANCE 1918
STATE BORDERS
STOCKHOLM
PETROGRAD
PSKOW
SWEDEN
GERMANY
BERLIN
MINSK
WARSAW
LODZ
BREST-LITOVSK
RUSSIA
KIEV
KHARKOV
ROSTOV
VIENNA
BUDAPEST
AUSTRIA-HUNGARY
ODESSA
KRONSTADT
SEVASTOPOL
RUMANIA
BELGRADE
SERBIA
BULGARIA
SOFIA

Russia's front line

The Eastern Front was the war everyone expected, one of movement and breakthroughs; the only surprise was that it was not decided quickly

Whereas the Western Front quickly became the war of attrition, with front lines barely shifting in four years, the Eastern Front was more reminiscent of wars past, as armies swept backwards and forwards. Churchill articulated the nub of the problem when he said: "In the east, the land was too big for the armies." No one looked remotely capable of achieving a knockout blow.

In a familiar gambit, Russia traded space and lives for time. In the north, Germans and Russians faced one another across a front that extended south from the Baltic with two noticeable salients, the northernmost German territory (East Prussia), including the 1914 battlefields of Tannenberg and First Masurian Lakes. Directly below this was the westernmost part of Russia, jutting out between East Prussia and Galicia like a stubby thumb, with Warsaw at its heart. The theatre that Austria-Hungary and Russia contested in yo-yo fashion, Galicia, followed and below this, Carpathia. The front continued towards the Black Sea, courtesy of Bulgaria and Romania joining the war on opposing sides. The Romanians proved a liability for the Russians as the Bulgarians poured into Dobruja, seizing the Romanian Black Sea port of Constanza and crossing the River Danube into Wallachia.

Turkey's entry into the war gave Russia another wholly different front to contest, betwixt the eastern side of the Black Sea and the Caspian. It was not just the Germans fighting on multiple fronts. Russia, pressured to attack because of early German successes in the west, ended up attacking Austria-Hungary in southern Poland and Galicia, and then the Germans, firstly in East Prussia and then north from Warsaw. It was inconceivable that the Russians, manpower heavy but material light, could sustain warfare on all these fronts with their obvious shortage of rifles, artillery, ammunition and clothing.

In the ranks of revolution

In one of the most significant events of modern history, Russia became the birthplace of communist revolution after it fell apart in World War I

The Imperial Government fell in the February Revolution and was followed by a period of awkward power-sharing between the Provisional Government and Petrograd Soviet before the October Revolution ended Russia's brief flirtation with democracy, installing the world's first communist dictatorship. The Provisional Government's determination to honour its treaty obligations and continue fighting the Allies' war guaranteed its downfall. As the Bolsheviks promised peace, they gained popularity as the only opposition party promising no compromise.

The Russian army continued functioning between the revolutions, illustrated by the July Offensive and resistance to Germany's Riga Offensive. Russia fought the Turks too, with an advance in Western Persia in March 1917. The Soviets were increasingly influential, however, so there were equal examples of troops refusing to bear arms.

The second revolution meant decision time for the army; for or against. The bulk of the rank-and-file was sick of war, so supported the new rulers. They embraced the Bolsheviks' 'Red Army' – majority discontents led by minority radicals who had engineered revolution. Opposing them were the 'Whites' – officers, cossacks, bourgeoisie, disinherited political groups; a rag-tag polyglot who could not accept the new regime.

The Bolsheviks set about bringing their involvement in WWI to an end. A precarious armistice was declared on the Eastern Front in December 1917, and as arguments raged about terms, Red Army founder Leon Trotsky declared the war over ahead of a formal peace. Germany recommenced hostilities a week later, advancing to within 160 kilometres of Petrograd. At Lenin's insistence, the Bolsheviks resumed negotiations. The punitive peace of Brest-Litovsk was signed in March, but fighting continued as Germany supported Whites against Reds in Ukraine and Finland. Although other nations also leant support, the Reds' internal following saw them through, although the civil war lasted into the 1920s and cost hundreds of thousands more Russian lives.

"The Provisional Government's determination to honour its treaty obligations and continue fighting the Allies' war guaranteed its downfall"

Important figures like General Kornilof opposed the revolution. He led a failed coup against the Petrograd Soviet and was killed in the ensuing conflict small areas with massed forces. Attempts were made to mask Russian intentions, artillery was advanced covertly and the duration of the bombardment was deliberately limited (and monitored from the air), as artillery and infantry attempted to co-ordinate. The front line trenches were moved as close as possible to the enemy's before 'zero hour', with infantry having already practiced on mock-ups of the German positions. There was also a strategic reserve, readied to exploit any incursion into enemy positions if necessary.

Brusilov deserved to succeed, but was not favoured with the commodity essential to all great generals: luck. He now argued for the Tsar's abdication, but also the continuance of the war. Tellingly, it was the Bolsheviks who caught the popular mood by calling for an end to the carnage. Brusilov was worth accommodating though – he would go on to work for the Bolsheviks after the war.

When the February Revolution occurred, it saw the tsar scapegoated, forced to abdicate and replaced by the Provisional Government. After two years of military reverses and food shortages, few can have been surprised at the combustible eruption when police fired on striking workers in Petrograd; few outside the aloof royal family anyway.

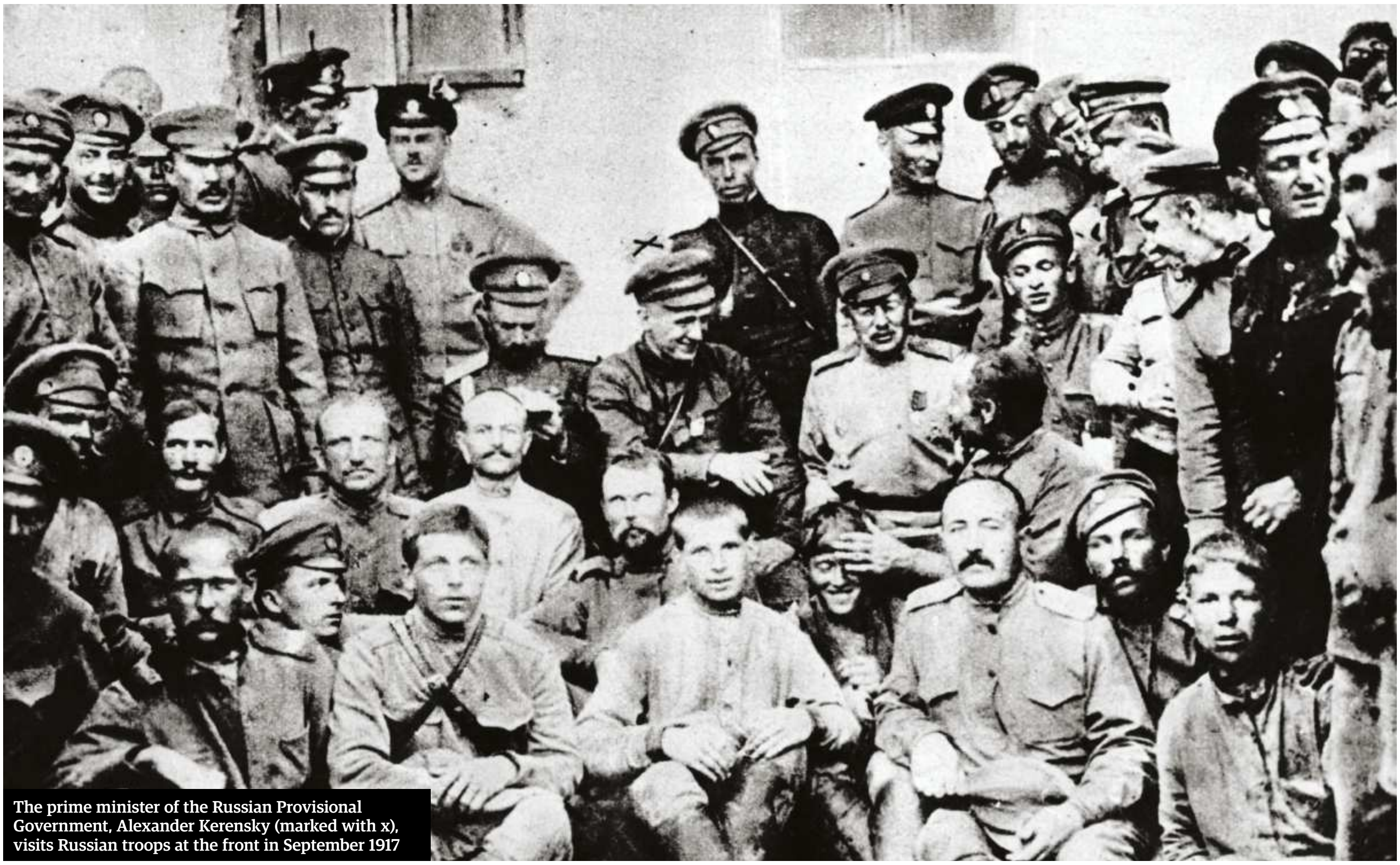
The new foreign minister, Pavel Miliukov, was in favour of continuing with the war in the hope of realising national aspirations. The same was true of Alexander Kerensky, Socialist Revolutionary leader, minister of war and future prime minister, who hoped to outflank the Bolsheviks by galvanising the nation into a fresh military effort based on a French-revolutionary style 'nation in arms' and the 'democratisation' of Russia's forces. Success on the battlefield would quell dissent at home. The novice leaders of a fledgling Russian democracy would fail, however, on the question of the war's prosecution and the relaxation of military discipline merely opening up the army to Vladimir's Lenin's anti-war propaganda. They would not be the first (or the last) set of politicians to mistakenly assume that wars would be popular and binding. For the tsar, meanwhile, it was now all about staying alive.

The Provisional Government was already on borrowed time as it competed with the workers' soviets (councils) for hearts and minds. Order Number 1 of the Petrograd Soviet stipulated that control over all arms now vested in soldiers' soviets, elected by the troops. The Provisional Government found itself in the unedifying position of effectively power-sharing with the soviet, which controlled large sections of the army and navy in and around Petrograd. The soviet also controlled the railway, postal and telegraph services and gave orders to soldiers and key personnel autonomously, without the say-so of the government.

Traditional military discipline was broken and most soldiers were now on strike against any hostile action, so the Russian war machine virtually ground to a halt. The German enemy, meanwhile, played fifth columnist, assisting Lenin and his acolytes to return to Russia from exile so they could foment revolution and disrupt, if not end, Russia's commitment to the war. Crucially, Lenin promised

A long column of Russian soldiers marches towards the front lines, c.1917

"Brusilov deserved to succeed, but was not favoured with the commodity essential to all great generals: luck"



The prime minister of the Russian Provisional Government, Alexander Kerensky (marked with x), visits Russian troops at the front in September 1917

Wary of incoming artillery fire, Russian soldiers keep watch for enemy movement

> “The rapid disintegration proved that Russian army morale no longer existed and that no Russian officer could count on his soldiers”

In this grizzly scene, a Russian soldier wanders through the frozen dead in the aftermath of a battle

Russian troops parading in front of Alexander Kerensky, July 1917

an end to the fighting, and the Russian population, sick of war, were easily swayed by this.

Given these circumstances, it is surprising Russia managed one more attack on the Galician Front when Brusilov launched the great July Offensive, or Kerensky Offensive, as it has also been dubbed. Commencing on 1 July, this encompassed the ten-day Battle of East Galicia, as the Russians moved towards Lviv in today’s western Ukraine.

Early success began with an unusually heavy bombardment, with inroads made against the Austro-Hungarians, but not against the more resilient Germans. Russian losses mounted, causing demoralisation. The broken-reed of the Romanians reared its head again for a Russo-Romanian attack in support of the offensive, which initially broke through at Mărăsti. Soldiers’ committees discussed whether officers’ orders should be obeyed, mass desertions occurred, and any officers trying to stand in the way were shot. By 16 July, the Russian advance had collapsed.

Led by German General Felix von Bothmer, a combination of Germans and Austrians began pushing the Russians back from 19 July, as their counterattack re-took the likes of Halicz, an important railhead point on the River Dniester in today’s western Ukraine, as well as Tarnopol and Czernowitz, both close to the Austro-Hungarian-Russian border in Galicia and Carpathia respectively. There was little Russian resistance as they marched through Galicia and Ukraine. By 20 July, the Russian line had broken and by 23 July they had retreated 240 kilometres. The rapid disintegration proved that Russian army morale no longer existed and that no Russian officer could count on his soldiers. Brusilov would be replaced by Lavr Kornilov, but it mattered not. The last Russian offensive of WWI ended in failure. As Churchill sensed, the war was to be ended, “…by the exhaustion of nations rather than the victories of armies.”

Unfortunately for the Russians, the attack was poorly timed, with increasing demands for peace, especially from within the army. Meanwhile, Kerensky was fixed on fulfilling obligations towards his allies, which hardly motivated the Russian soldiery to fight. He needed a victory to restore the soldiers’ morale and find popular favour, thereby strengthening his Provisional Government, which faced increasing rancour because of food shortages and rising prices. He gambled on a turn of the die and lost, severely denting the latent democracy’s credibility in the process and leaving it fatally weakened as military reverses kick-started the July Days, when soldiers and workers rioted in Petrograd against the Provisional Government.

There was still more fighting between Germans and Russians at the northernmost end of the Eastern Front, where the Christmas Battles had taken place almost a year before. Early in September, the Battle of Riga saw the Germans capture the city in an offensive, which saw them take this end of the front in the final battle between soldiers of the two nations. Russian soldiers defending Kiev, however, refused to fight and fled from their adversaries.

Meanwhile, Kornilov, unhappy with the Provisional Government’s plans, marched on Petrograd as the leader of a counter-revolutionary movement aiming to first take control of the government, then smash the power of the soviet. In a curious case of poacher turned gamekeeper, the Bolsheviks’ Red Guard was asked by the government to help defend the city. Kornilov’s bid for power, which might have nipped Bolshevism in the bud, was defeated and he was arrested on Kerensky’s say-so. The Bolsheviks’ popularity increased further as a result of this crisis, and they rapidly orchestrated their seizure of power. Some soldiers supported them and others refused to fight for the government. Within a year, the Russian state had morphed from semi-autocracy, to democracy, to the world’s first communist dictatorship as a result of the October Revolution. Tsar Nicholas II paid for taking his ill-prepared nation to war with his life, assassinated by the Bolsheviks in July 1918 along with the rest of his immediate family.

Russia’s World War I experience seems lost today, an historical afterthought, a mere footnote to the stupendous events of the Revolution. Churchill was correct when he termed it ‘The Unknown War’. Unknown, rather than overlooked, but perhaps this is changing as historians start to show more interest in WWI’s Eastern Front in its own right.

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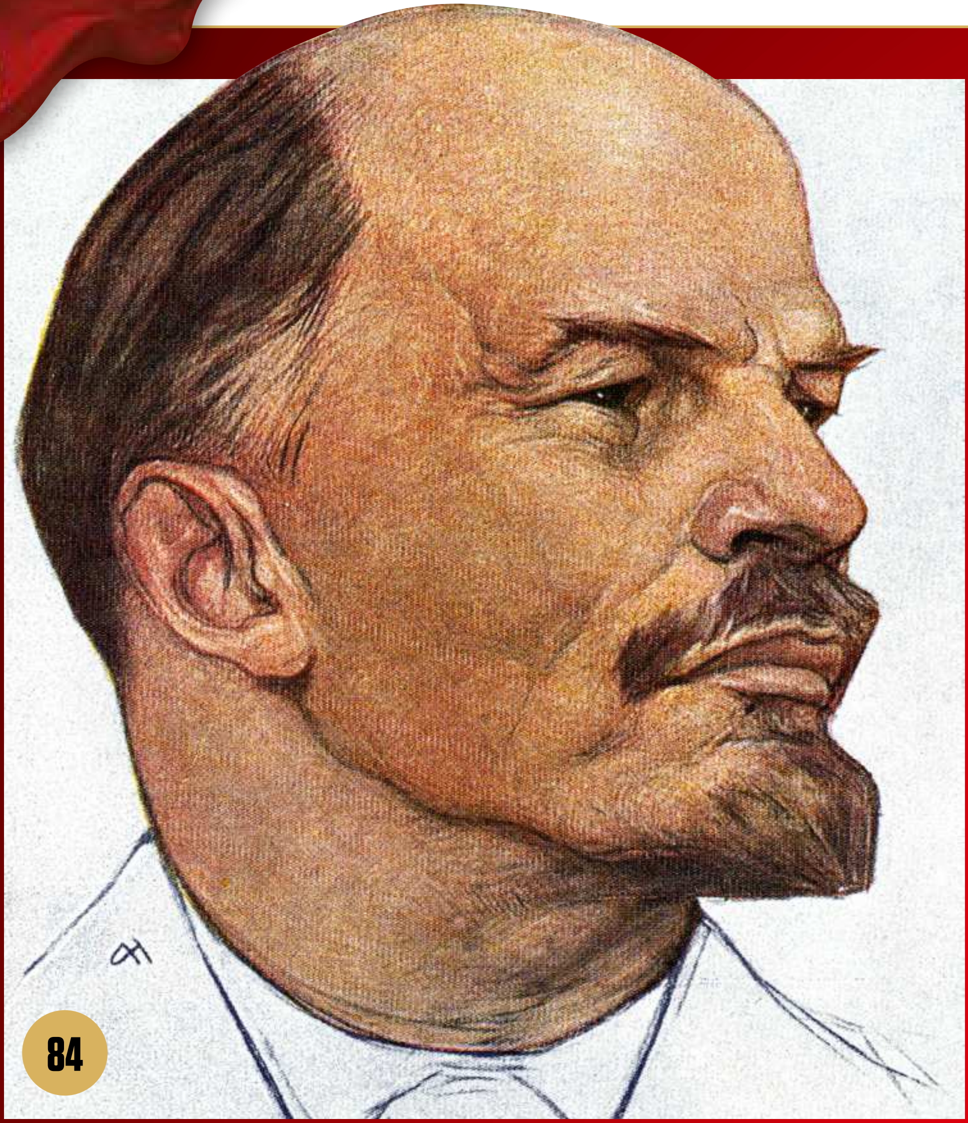

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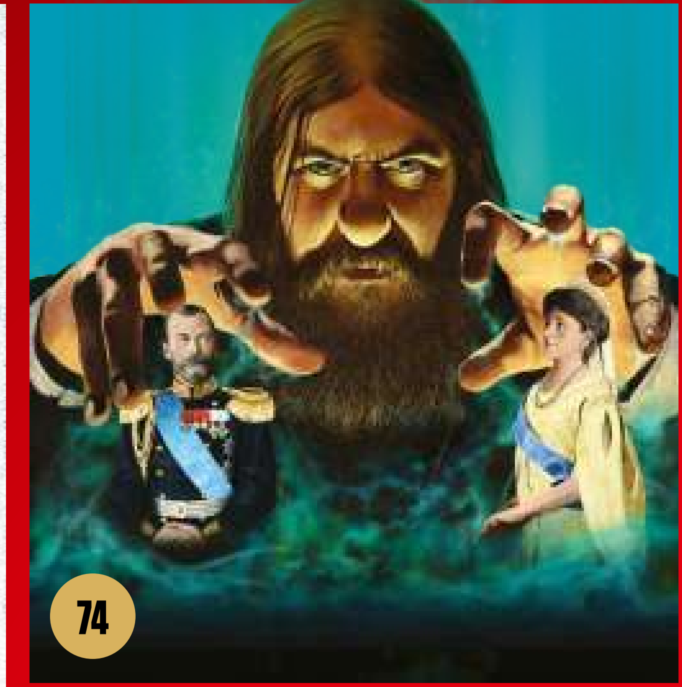

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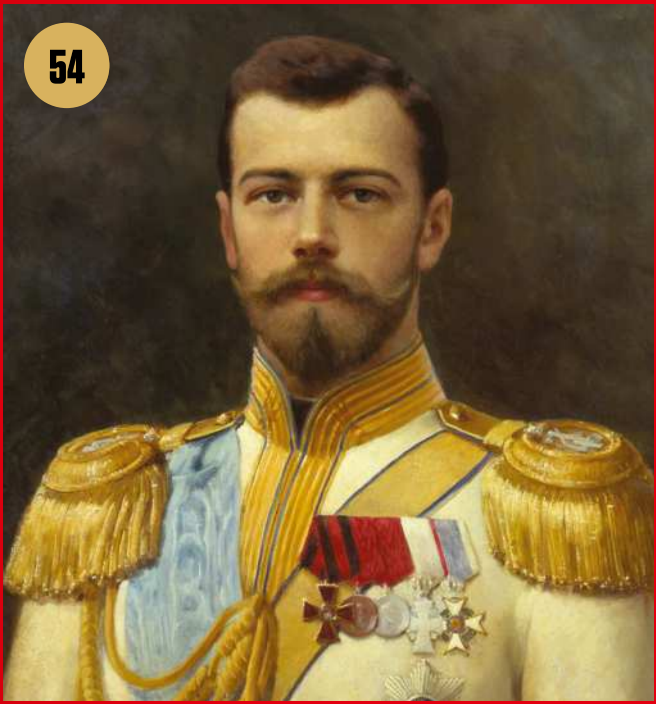

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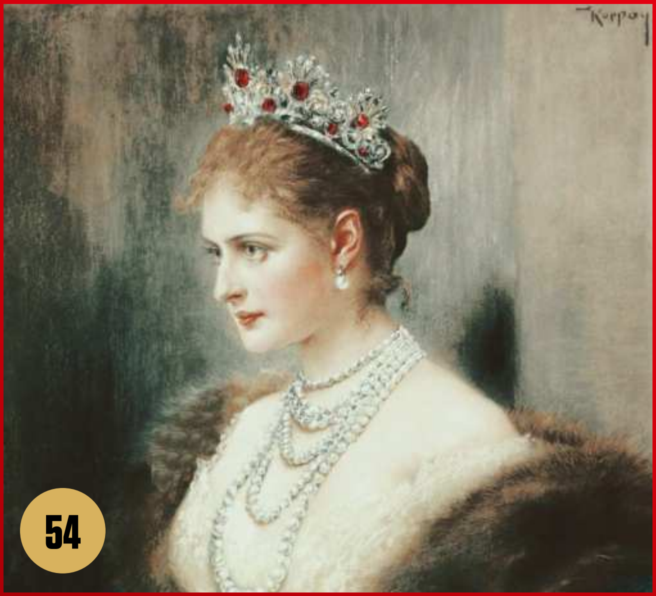

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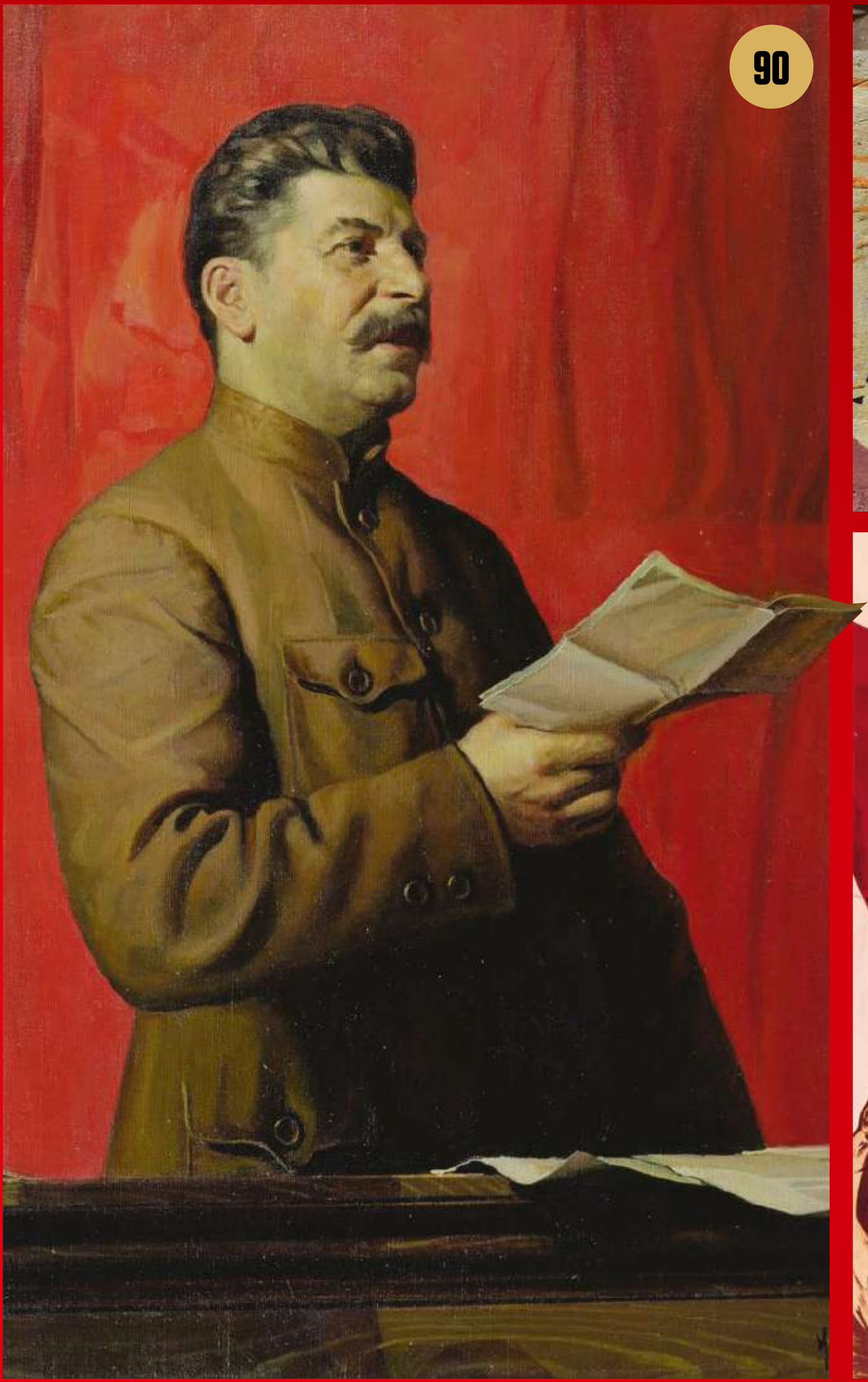

ANIMAL FARM
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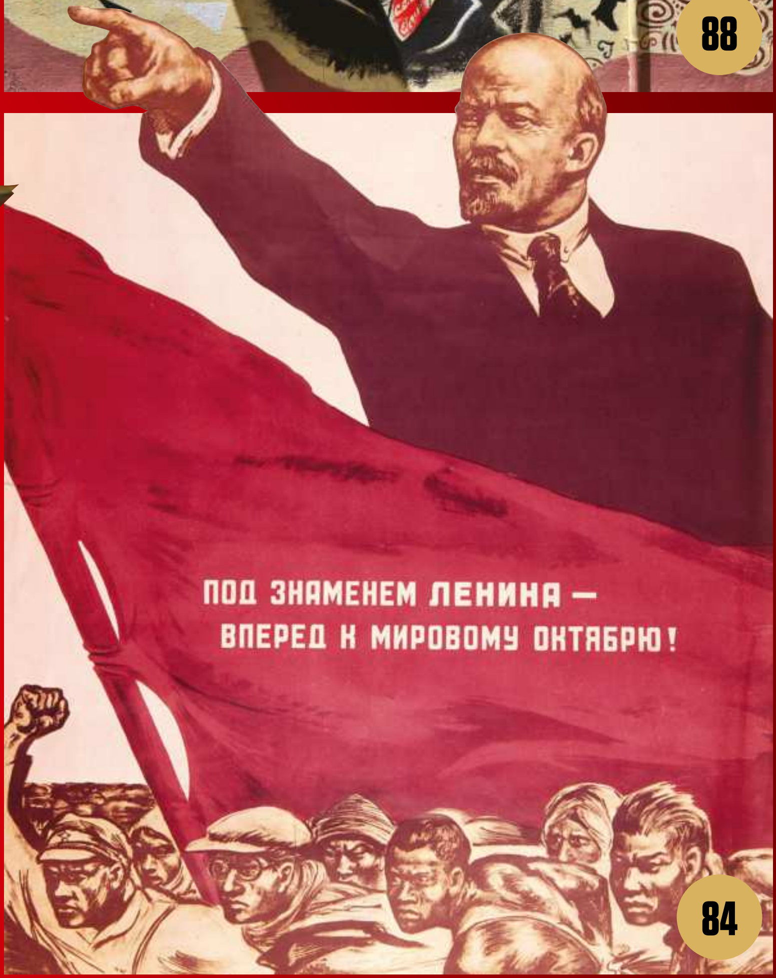
ПОД ЗНАМЕНЕМ ЛЕНИНА —
ВПЕРЕД К МИРОВОМУ ОКТЯБРЮ!
84

People

From the dynasty that had ruled for 300 years to the agitators ushering in a new society, these are the Revolution's key players

54 **Rise and fall of the Romanovs**

64 **Nicholas II: Curse of the Tsar**

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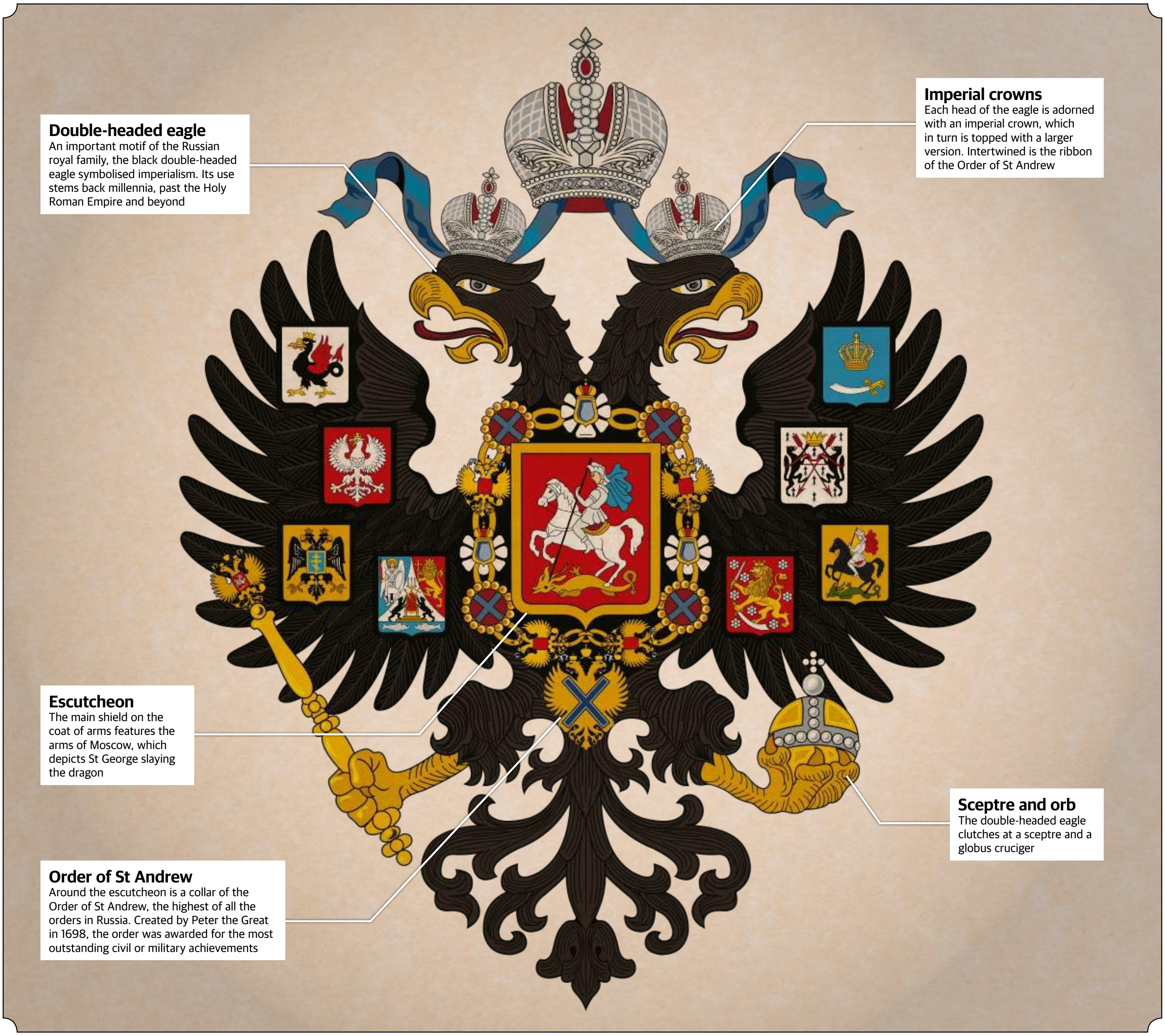
90 **The man of steel**

Rise and fall of the Romanovs

1613-1917

A reign characterised by intrigue, ambition, treachery and revolution, the Romanov dynasty – the last royal family of Russia – met its tragic fate after 300 years of rule



Double-headed eagle
An important motif of the Russian royal family, the black double-headed eagle symbolised imperialism. Its use stems back millennia, past the Holy Roman Empire and beyond

Imperial crowns
Each head of the eagle is adorned with an imperial crown, which in turn is topped with a larger version. Intertwined is the ribbon of the Order of St Andrew

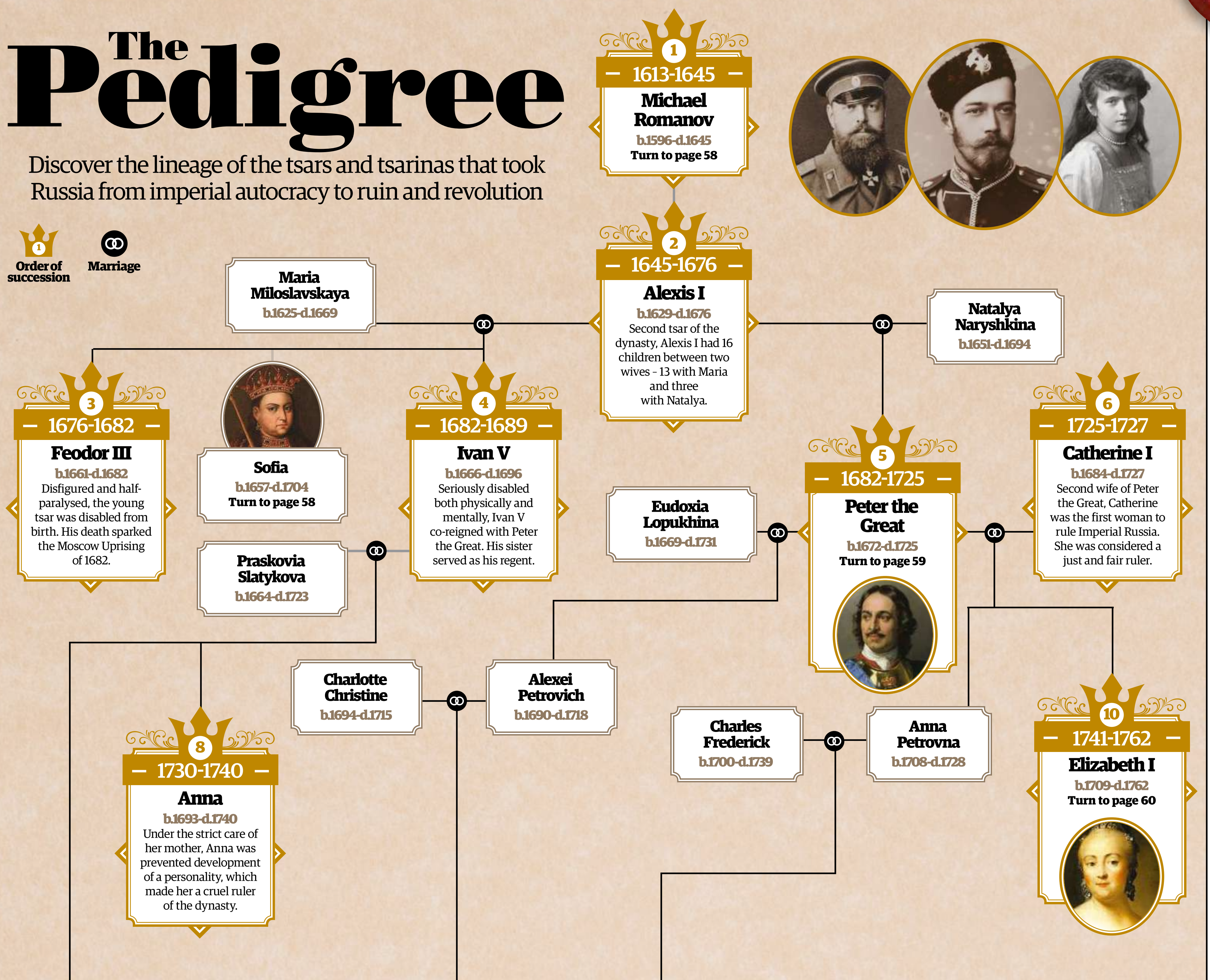
Escutcheon
The main shield on the coat of arms features the arms of Moscow, which depicts St George slaying the dragon

Sceptre and orb
The double-headed eagle clutches at a sceptre and a globus cruciger

Order of St Andrew
Around the escutcheon is a collar of the Order of St Andrew, the highest of all the orders in Russia. Created by Peter the Great in 1698, the order was awarded for the most outstanding civil or military achievements

The Pedigree

Discover the lineage of the tsars and tsarinas that took Russia from imperial autocracy to ruin and revolution



1
1613-1645
Michael Romanov
b.1596-d.1645
Turn to page 58

2
1645-1676
Alexis I
b.1629-d.1676
Second tsar of the dynasty, Alexis I had 16 children between two wives - 13 with Maria and three with Natalya.

Maria Miloslavskaya
b.1625-d.1669

Natalya Naryshkina
b.1651-d.1694

3
1676-1682
Feodor III
b.1661-d.1682
Disfigured and half-paralysed, the young tsar was disabled from birth. His death sparked the Moscow Uprising of 1682.

Sofia
b.1657-d.1704
Turn to page 58

Praskovia Slatykova
b.1664-d.1723

4
1682-1689
Ivan V
b.1666-d.1696
Seriously disabled both physically and mentally, Ivan V co-reigned with Peter the Great. His sister served as his regent.

Eudoxia Lopukhina
b.1669-d.1731

5
1682-1725
Peter the Great
b.1672-d.1725
Turn to page 59

6
1725-1727
Catherine I
b.1684-d.1727
Second wife of Peter the Great, Catherine was the first woman to rule Imperial Russia. She was considered a just and fair ruler.

Charlotte Christine
b.1694-d.1715

Alexei Petrovich
b.1690-d.1718

Charles Frederick
b.1700-d.1739

Anna Petrovna
b.1708-d.1728

8
1730-1740
Anna
b.1693-d.1740
Under the strict care of her mother, Anna was prevented development of a personality, which made her a cruel ruler of the dynasty.

10
1741-1762
Elizabeth I
b.1709-d.1762
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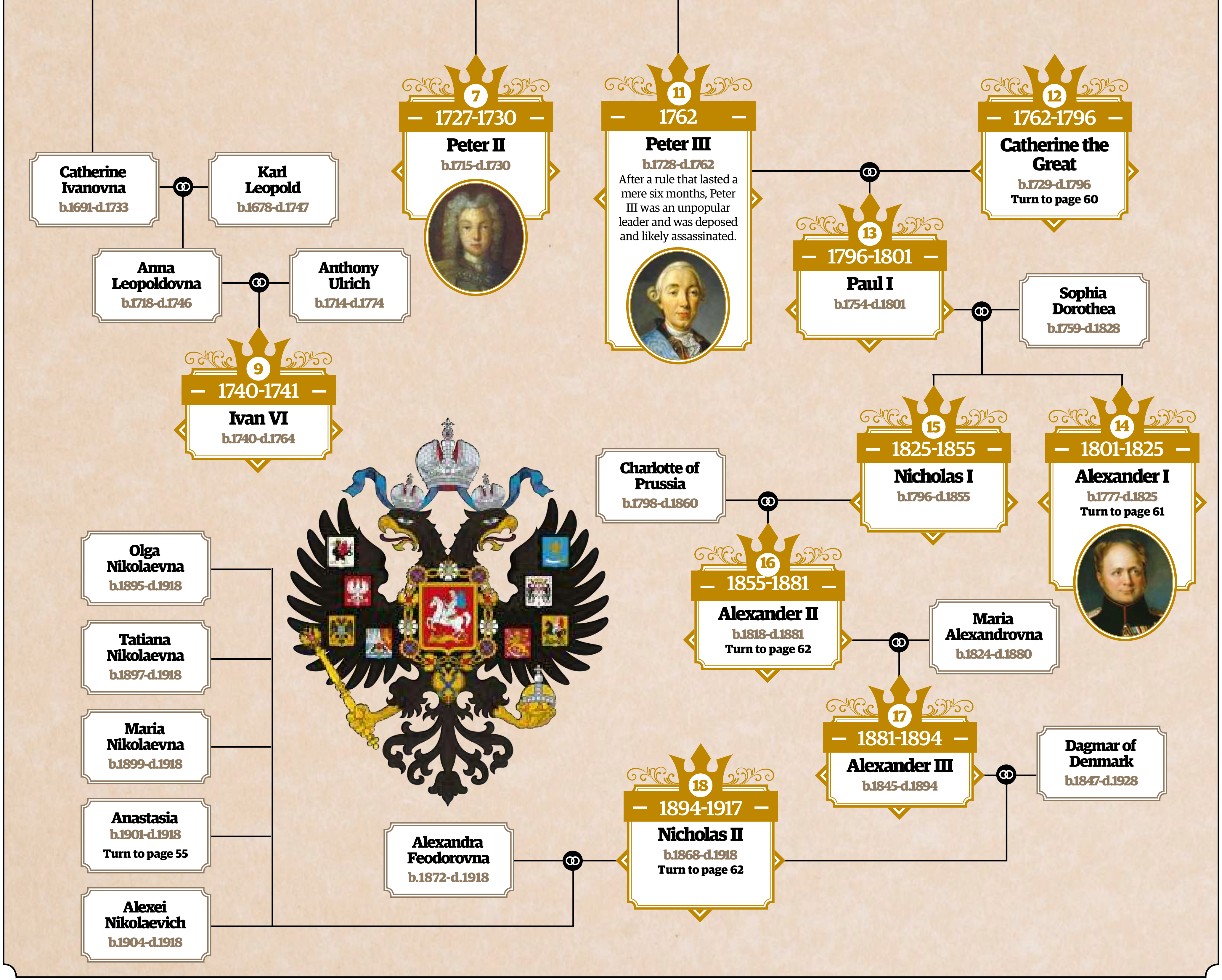

Catherine Ivanovna
b.1691-d.1733

Karl Leopold
b.1678-d.1747

Anna Leopoldovna
b.1718-d.1746

Anthony Ulrich
b.1714-d.1774

9
– 1740-1741 –
Ivan VI
b.1740-d.1764

7
– 1727-1730 –
Peter II
b.1715-d.1730

11
– 1762 –
Peter III
b.1728-d.1762
After a rule that lasted a mere six months, Peter III was an unpopular leader and was deposed and likely assassinated.

12
– 1762-1796 –
Catherine the Great
b.1729-d.1796
Turn to page 60

13
– 1796-1801 –
Paul I
b.1754-d.1801

Sophia Dorothea
b.1759-d.1828

15
– 1825-1855 –
Nicholas I
b.1796-d.1855

14
– 1801-1825 –
Alexander I
b.1777-d.1825
Turn to page 61

Charlotte of Prussia
b.1798-d.1860

16
– 1855-1881 –
Alexander II
b.1818-d.1881
Turn to page 62

Maria Alexandrovna
b.1824-d.1880

17
– 1881-1894 –
Alexander III
b.1845-d.1894

Dagmar of Denmark
b.1847-d.1928

18
– 1894-1917 –
Nicholas II
b.1868-d.1918
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Alexandra Feodorovna
b.1872-d.1918

Olga Nikolaevna
b.1895-d.1918

Tatiana Nikolaevna
b.1897-d.1918

Maria Nikolaevna
b.1899-d.1918

Anastasia
b.1901-d.1918
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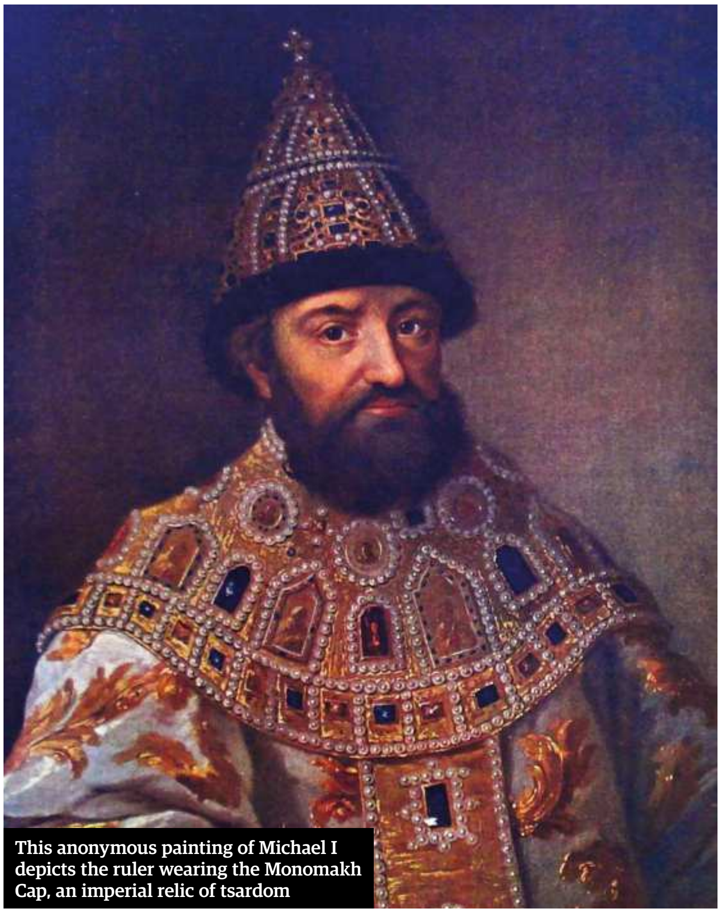
Alexei Nikolaevich
b.1904-d.1918



This anonymous painting of Michael I depicts the ruler wearing the Monomakh Cap, an imperial relic of tsardom

Michael I

b.1596-d.1645 ♛ 1613-1645

The patriarch

Michael Fyodorovich Romanov was a boy when he came to the throne in 1613. Since the death of the last tsar of the Rurik dynasty, Feodor Ivanovich, in 1598, Russia had stumbled into a dark era that came to be known as the Time of Troubles.

A widespread famine added to the already tempestuous political climate, and various men (such as Boris Godunov, the False Dmitry, Vasily Shuisky) vied for power. Assassinations and massacres ensued, plus foreign invasions and internal uprisings such as the Bolotnikov Rebellion of 1606-07, made this time all the more treacherous.

Out of this terrible phase, the Romanovs - a family related to the Rurik tsar Ivan the Terrible's first wife - were judged in a national assembly to be the best fit to rule the country. From this family, the gentle, self-effacing 16-year-old Michael Romanov was elected. His father was Patriarch Philaret (previously Fyodor Nikitich Romanov) and his mother was Xenia Shestova, who was a member of the Saltykov family. Despite his mother's very natural and rational concerns about the probably dangerous position this now put her son in, the new ruler was crowned Michael I, Tsar of All Russia, on 21 July 1613, in Cathedral of the Assumption in the Kremlin, Moscow.

With the need to secure the new Romanov dynasty, the new tsar was strongly encouraged to marry and so beget the necessary heir - and he ended up marrying twice. In late 1624, Michael wed Princess Maria Vladimirovna Dolgorukova; unfortunately, this marriage lasted only four months due to Maria's sudden death. Not long after, Michael married Eudoxia Streshnyova, and this marriage proved a much greater success. Eudoxia bore him ten children, including the future Tsar Alexei I of Russia. Michael died a day after his 49th birthday in 1645.

Sophia Alekseyevna

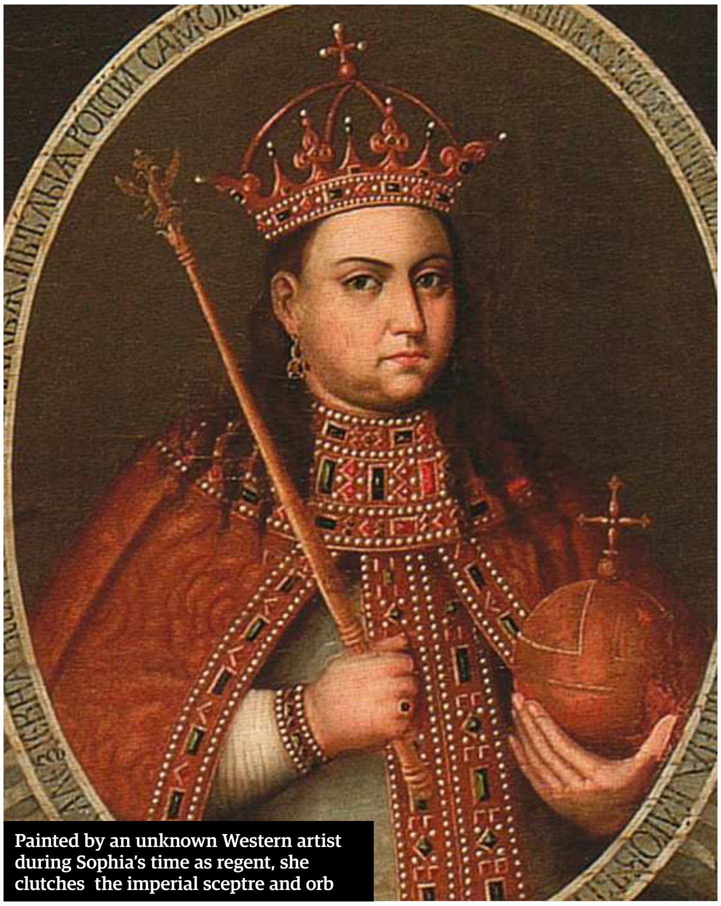
b.1657-d.1704 ♛ Regent: 1682-1689

A female regent

Sophia was the daughter of Alexei and the sister of Feodor III, the short-lived tsar whose 20-year life had been plagued by infirmities. At a time when women were largely withheld from power and veiled, the fact that Sophia Alekseyevna became a regent - and therefore a ruler - of Russia was quite an achievement. She was regent over her two younger brothers, tsars Ivan and Peter.

Foreign policy under her was the major political achievement of her regency. Russia and Poland had long fought over Ukraine, and especially its important city of Kiev. Sophia's single most influential adviser was Vasily Vasilyevich Golitsyn - a Westernised statesman from one of the great aristocratic houses, the Golitsyns. In the negotiations between Russian and Polish diplomats, a settlement was reached: Poland gave up its claim to Kiev in return for Russia joining in the fight against the Ottoman Empire, which was one of the biggest threats facing Europe. It was also during Sophia's regency that the first Russian-Chinese treaty - the Treaty of Nerchinsk of 1689 - was signed.

Sophia's downfall came about in a decidedly odd way. Tsar Peter - now 17 - was at Preobrazhenskoe, and there, a frantic attendant woke him from his sleep warning him that the Streltsy (Russian guards) were on their way to him. Peter ran, got a horse and fled to the Troitsky Monastery. Although there hadn't been any actual danger, the fact that the young tsar had taken refuge in a holy place was enough to make many supporters flock to his side - including the Patriarch. Eventually, Sophia was forced out from her position as regent and was sent to the Novodevichy Convent, where she died on 14 July 1704, after living there for some years. Sophia Alekseyevna's regency marked one of the first instances of rule over Russia by a woman.



Painted by an unknown Western artist during Sophia's time as regent, she clutches the imperial sceptre and orb

Peter the Great

b.1672-d.1725 ♛ 1682-1725

The great one

Peter, the eldest of Tsar Alexei's children with his second wife Natalya, was considerably healthier than the rest of his half-brothers and sisters, several of whom had been born with various disabilities. At a towering height of just over two metres, especially given the time period in which he lived, Peter was certainly a larger-than-life character. He wanted to modernise Russia and bring it into line with other more technologically advanced European nations, and he was keen to learn about how to get the ball rolling in this respect. One of the major things he wished to achieve was for Russia to have a navy, and so he made his way around Europe in pursuit of this vision, and then headed to Britain.

In January 1698, Peter arrived in London, where he met King William III and rented John Evelyn's house, Sayes Court, in Deptford. At first, Evelyn seems to have been satisfied with the situation.

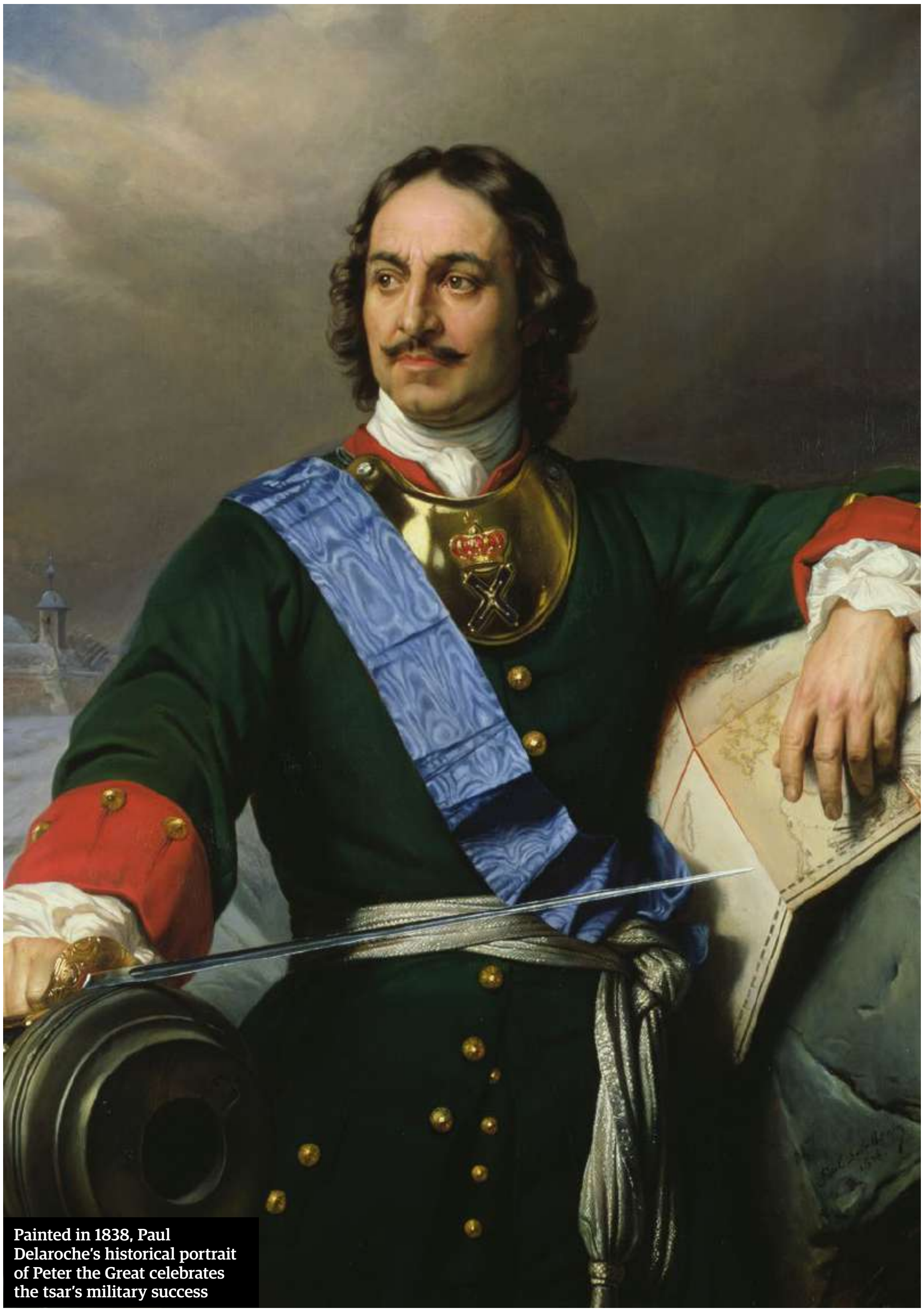
He wrote: "30 January 1698: The Czar of Muscovy being come to England, and having a mind to see the building of ships, hired my house at Sayes Court, and made it his court and palace, newly furnished for him by the King."

> "Strange, but true - on 5 September 1698, he instituted a tax on beards"

Peter held some drunken events at the house, and when he vacated, it was found that there were bullet holes in the paintings, the wood from the stairs had been wrenched up and used as firewood, and Evelyn's cherished holly bushes were badly damaged. Evelyn was most put out about what he found when he returned to his home.

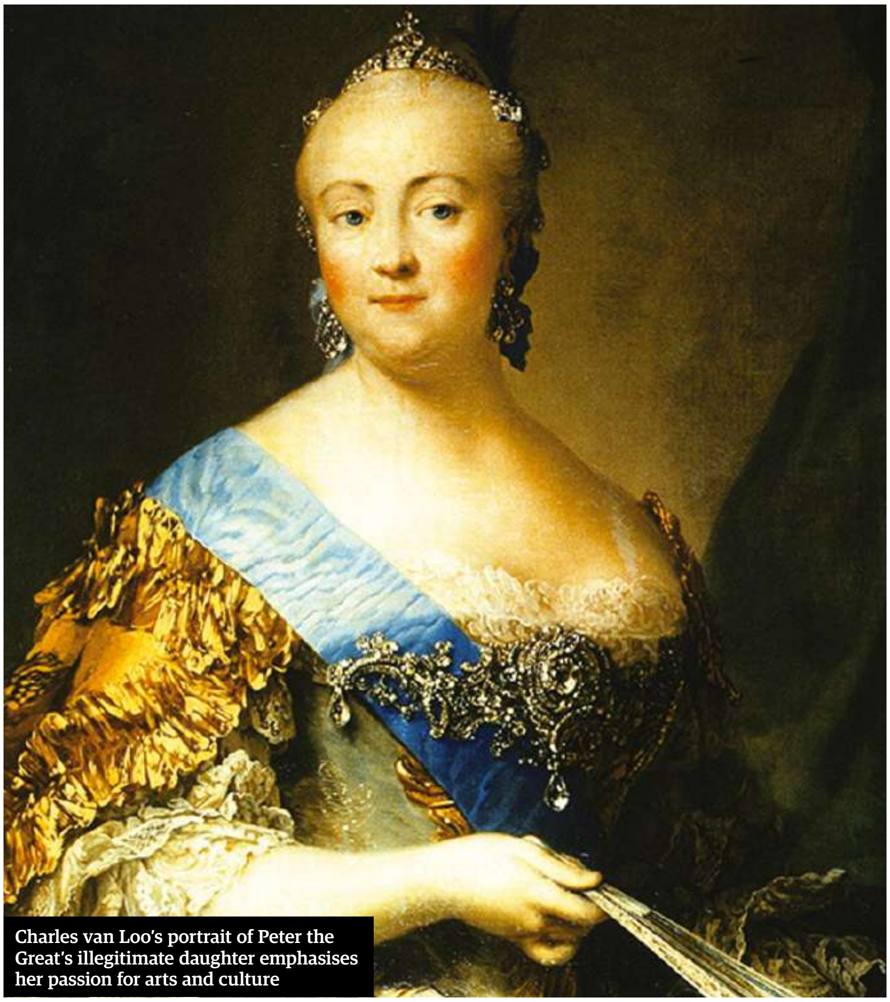
He wrote: "9 June 1698: To Deptford, to see how miserably the Czar had left my house, after three months making it his Court. I got Sir Christopher Wren, the King's surveyor, and Mr. London, his gardener, to go and estimate the repairs, for which they allowed £150 in their report to the Lords of the Treasury."

William III gifted Peter a ship, and the Russian tsar had his portrait painted by court painter Godfrey Kneller (this fine, full-length painting is today often displayed at Kensington Palace). When Peter returned to Russia, he commissioned shipbuilding for a Russian navy (which was ready by 1703) and - strange, but true - on 5 September 1698, he instituted a tax on beards. He had seen that European men were clean-shaven and, despite the fact that beards were very much part of Russian culture at that time, wanted Russia to also adopt this facial hair-free style. Despite his reforms in areas of trade, administration and more, though, Russia was largely still feudal when it came to its serfs. In most Western European countries, serfdom had declined substantially as a result of the Black Death, but Russia would keep serfs until Tsar Alexander's emancipation reform in the 19th century. Serfs, even during Peter the Great's time, were still considered almost subhuman.


Painted in 1838, Paul Delaroche's historical portrait of Peter the Great celebrates the tsar's military success

When it came to his personal life, Peter married twice and also had mistresses. His marriage to his first wife, Eudoxia Lupukhina, was an arrangement made by his mother in 1689 and was unhappy, even though it produced three children. In 1698, Peter forced Eudoxia into a nunnery and obtained a divorce. Peter's second wife was Martha Skavronskaya, a Livonian (present-day Estonia and Latvia) peasant woman.

Peter, who had ruled for some 43 years, was struck down by a severe bladder infection - it was so inflamed he was unable to pass urine - and he died in Saint Petersburg on 25 January 1725. His reign proved to be one of the most successful in the Romanov dynasty. His wife, Martha, succeeded him for two years as Empress Catherine I of Russia until her death in 1727.



Charles van Loo's portrait of Peter the Great's illegitimate daughter emphasises her passion for arts and culture

Elizabeth

b.1709-d.1762 ♛ 1741-1762

An imperial Venus

Elizabeth, as the illegitimate daughter of Peter the Great and his mistress Catherine, was unlikely to ever rule. Even though her father eventually married her mother, Elizabeth had been born out of wedlock in 1709. Peter loved his children and it appears that he took an active interest in their education, as far as time permitted.

Elizabeth, with her blue eyes, blonde tresses and vivacious personality, was considered very attractive. This, combined with her intelligence and education, was why Peter hoped to arrange a great marriage for her. One match he sought for Elizabeth was with King Louis XV of France, but her possible illegitimacy - combined with the fact that her mother had been a peasant - was enough to put an end to these aspirations.

In the autumn of 1726, Elizabeth met Prince Charles Augustus of Holstein and the two fell in love. They were ready to announce their engagement in early 1727, when Elizabeth's mother sickened and died.

One terrible grief soon followed another, as only a month later, Elizabeth's beloved fiancé contracted smallpox and died. Elizabeth never officially married (although she was rumoured to have secretly wed her lover Alexis Razumovsky - her Ukrainian 'Emperor of the Night').

Elizabeth's sister, Grand Duchess Anna Petrovna, married Charles Frederick, Duke of Holstein-Gottorp, the brother of Prince Charles Augustus, but his boorish behaviour and the separation from her sister made her very unhappy.

In February of 1728, Anna gave birth to her only child, a son, but fever set in days later. Anna died from puerperal fever on 4 March 1728, aged only 20. The loss of her dear sister was yet another blow for Elizabeth. When Elizabeth died in 1762, her nephew Karl Peter Ulrich succeeded her on the throne as Tsar Peter III.

Catherine the Great

b.1729-d.1796 ♛ 1762-1796

Killing for the crown

Sophie Augusta Fredericka was born on 21 April 1729, to Prince Christian Augustus of Arnhalt-Zerbst and Princess Johanna Elizabeth of Holstein-Gottorp. Her parents had an unhappy union, exacerbated by Johanna's belief that she'd married beneath her to a man of inferior rank (Johanna was the sister of Prince Charles Augustus of Holstein, who had died shortly before he was to be married to Empress Elizabeth of Russia). Her mother, who had wanted a son, greeted the birth of Sophie with coldness and disappointment. The lack of maternal warmth that Johanna exhibited towards her daughter was not applied to her second child, a son, Wilhelm Christian, upon whom she lavished much affection. Despite this, Sophie was well-educated - learning under the French Huguenot Elizabeth Cardel and the more strict Pastor Wagner.

As an adolescent, Sophie was pragmatic when it came to her looks. She was then rather plain, and so endeavoured to make up for this by developing many other qualities. When she was 14, she met King Frederick the Great of Prussia, upon whom she made a favourable impression. His meeting with her prompted him to write to Empress Elizabeth of Russia about the young girl's intelligence, and this paved the way for the empress to consider Sophie as a bride for her son Peter.

> "Catherine had an illegitimate son with her lover Grigori Orlov"

The marriage between the 17-year-old Peter and his 16-year-old bride, Catherine (who had been given this new name when she converted to the Russian Orthodox Church) was not a merry union. Unlike her husband, Catherine made the most of her situation and worked very hard to learn the Russian language. In 1754, Catherine gave birth to a son, Paul Petrovich (later Tsar Paul I). His paternity is still questioned, and it was rumoured he was fathered by her lover Serge Saltykov.

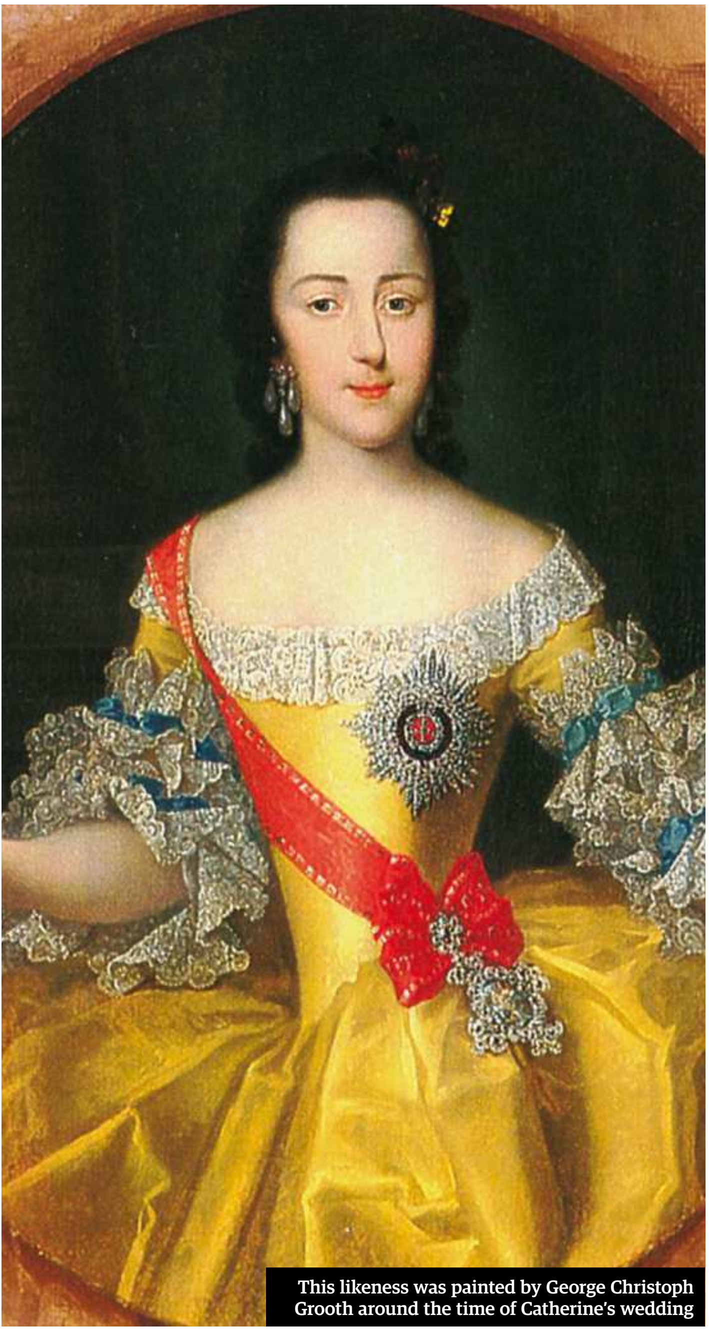
In 1762, Empress Elizabeth died, leaving the unpopular Peter the crown. Catherine and her supporters launched a coup d'état against her husband. In her memoirs, she wrote: "Peter III renounced the empire at Oranienbaum, in full liberty, surrounded by 1,500 Holstein troops, and came to Peterhoff, accompanied by Elizabeth Voronzoff, Godowitz, and Michael Ismafloff. There, as a guard, I assigned him five officers and some soldiers. This was on the 29th of June, the Feast of St Peter, at noon." Peter died shortly thereafter, possibly by murder. Catherine became sole ruler.

The subject of Catherine's paramours is of importance, for she was a person who needed love and support. Catherine had an illegitimate son with her lover Grigori Orlov, and her only daughter, probably fathered by Stanisław Poniatowski, was born in 1757. Her most influential affair was with Grigory Potemkin - one of the great statesmen of 18th-century European history.

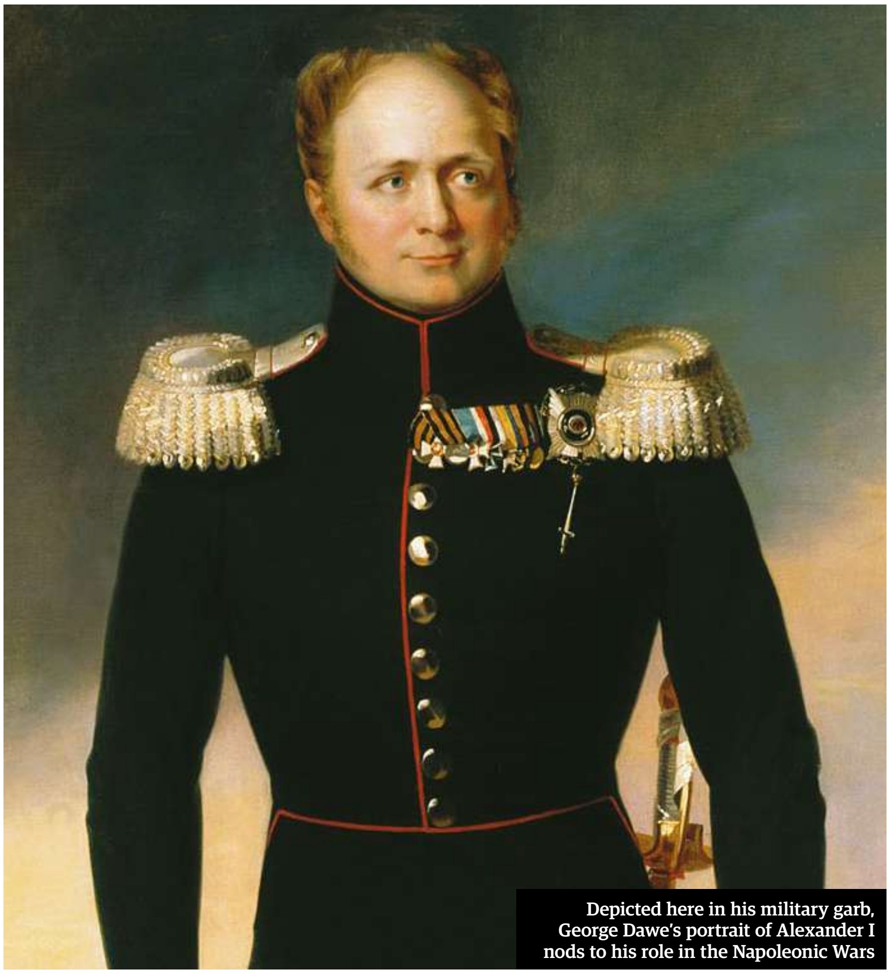
Catherine was a great lover of art and literature and she knew how to use propaganda. There are many portraits of her regally dressed and conveying a commanding sense of imperial majesty. She was a bibliophile and an intellectual, and maintained a close correspondence with some of the greatest minds of the Enlightenment, including Denis Diderot and Voltaire. In 1795, Catherine founded the Imperial Public Library (now the National Library of Russia) in the then-capital Saint Petersburg.

A popularly related story about Catherine was that she met her death by being crushed to death under the weight of a horse with which she was copulating. This is simply one of several malicious myths, for she died from a cerebral haemorrhage on 17 November 1796.

Catherine's reign - the longest female sovereignty in Russian history - was a testament to her political acumen and her Enlightenment ideals. The indelible stamp of her reign upon Russia can be seen to this day.



This likeness was painted by George Christoph Grooth around the time of Catherine's wedding



Depicted here in his military garb, George Dawe's portrait of Alexander I nods to his role in the Napoleonic Wars

Alexander I

b.1777-d.1825 ♛ 1801-1825

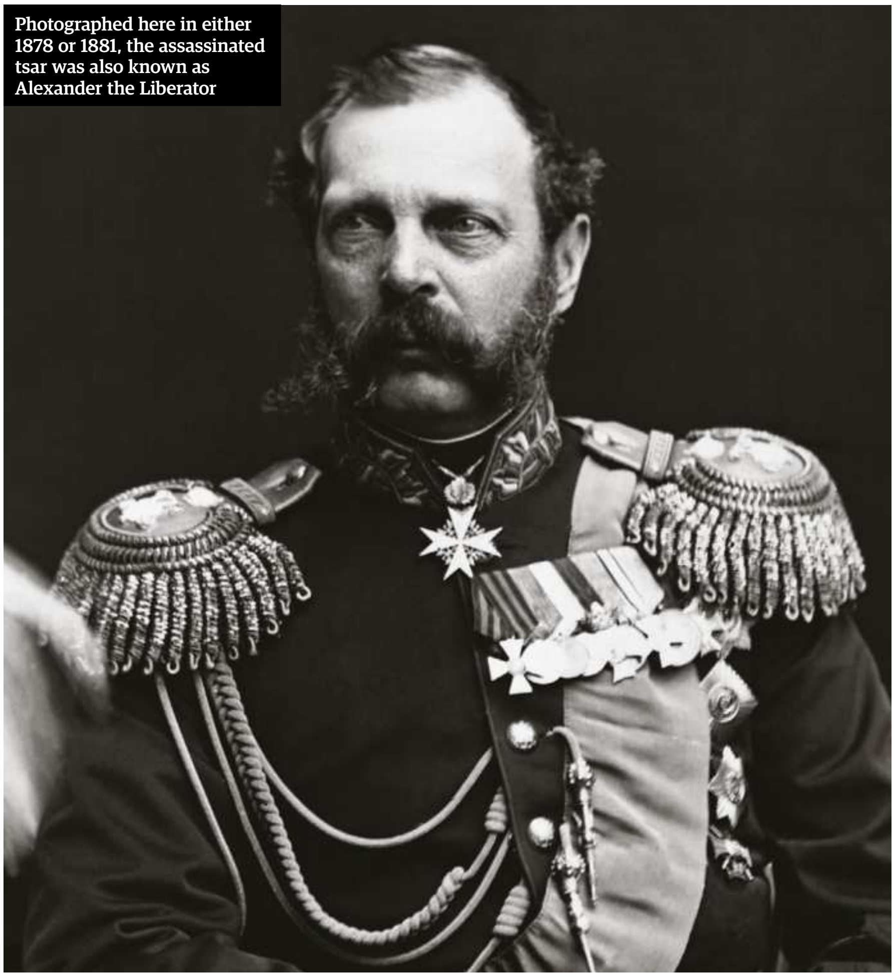
A Tsar at war

Alexander was the son of Tsar Paul I, who was the son of Catherine the Great and Tsar Peter III (though some continued to speculate his father was Serge Saltykov). Empress Catherine favoured her grandson Alexander over her son Paul, and this created a rather difficult dynamic. In 1793, Alexander married the beautiful Princess Louise of Baden. This marriage began happily enough, but over time and with the death of their two daughters, their relationship deteriorated. When Tsar Paul was assassinated in 1801, Alexander became tsar.

Best known for being the tsar of Leo Tolstoy's epic historical novel *War And Peace*, set during the Napoleonic Wars, Alexander I is most known for his on/off friendship with Napoleon Bonaparte. Alexander was present at the Battle of Austerlitz in 1805, and was in power when Napoleon invaded Russia in 1812, during which the Battle of Borodino was fought.

This tsar had connections to Queen Victoria of Britain. When she was born at Kensington Palace in 1819, she was christened Alexandrina Victoria in honour of him, her godfather.

Tsar Alexander died from Typhus in Taganrog, Russia, on 1 December 1825. As none of his legitimate children had survived, his brother became his successor as Tsar Nicholas I. This was by no means a smooth transition. On 26 December that year, an uprising that came to be known as the Decembrist Revolt took place in Peter's Square in Saint Petersburg. Led by army officers at the head of some 3,000 soldiers, these protestors were alarmed that Alexander's older brother Constantine Pavlovich had been overlooked. The reality was that Constantine had no desire to become tsar. The uprising had been for naught, and five of the Decembrists were hanged. The rest were exiled to areas such as Siberia. Nicholas's 30-year reign ended with his death in the Winter Palace in 1855.



Photographed here in either 1878 or 1881, the assassinated tsar was also known as Alexander the Liberator

Alexander II

b.1818-d.1881 ♛ 1855-1881

The assassin's choice

Alexander Nicholaievich was the son of Tsar Nicholas I and Alexandra Fyodorovna. By the time Alexander ascended the throne in March of 1865, Russia was in the midst of the Crimean War. Russia, largely alone in the conflict against a massive coalition of British, French, Ottoman and Sardinian forces, lost – which led to the signing of the Treaty of Paris of 1856.

Alexander was a lusty character, as his sexually explicit letters to his mistress Princess Yekaterina (Katya) Mikhailovna Dolgorukova clearly show. When his wife Marie of Hesse and by Rhine (whom the Mariinsky Theatre was named after) died in 1880, Alexander and Katya embarked upon a morganatic marriage.

In 1861, Alexander II issued the Emancipation of the Serfs, which freed all serfs from their owners. This was a radical reform, and not everyone was pleased with the results. Some thought the reforms under Alexander were simply not enough, and indeed in many aspects of Russian society, things were well behind other European nations. In 1867, Alexander sold the Russian territory of Alaska to the United States of America for $7.2 million, and gold was later found in the nearby Yukon in the 1890s.

Despite his major reformations, there were those who resented power being held by tsars (which would culminate with the Bolsheviks in 1917). Alexander II was targeted for assassination several times throughout his reign. Then, on 13 March 1881, terrorists from 'The People's Will' threw a bomb under Alexander's carriage. The tsar suffered catastrophic wounds – his legs were torn off by the blast, and other parts of his body were badly damaged as he swiftly lost blood.

Many people, including the terrorist, were killed or injured in this assassination. The tsar, still clinging to life, was taken back to his home, where his family gathered around him before he died from his wounds.

Nicholas II

b.1868-d.1918 ♛ 1894-1917

The last Romanov

The history of Nicholas II, his wife and his children is one of the great tragedies of the Romanov dynasty. The family line, which had ruled over Russia for over 300 years, came to a bloody end in 1918 with Nicholas at the helm. Nicholas was the son of Tsar Alexander III and Maria Feodorovna. Alexander was known as the 'Peacemaker' because Russia was not involved in any major warfare during his reign.

Through his mother's side, Nicholas was closely related to both King George V of the British Empire and the controversial character Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany. In the 1890s, Nicholas fell in love with the German Princess Alix of Hesse, who was a granddaughter of Queen Victoria. On 26 November 1894, the couple were married at the Winter Palace in Saint Petersburg.

They went on to have five children: four daughters, Olga, Tatiana, Maria, Anastasia, and one son, Alexei. The latter suffered from haemophilia, a disorder that had been carried from Queen Victoria through her children.

It was Alexei's hereditary illness that was the cause of Alexandra's great anxiety. In her desperation, she turned to the ministrations of Grigory Rasputin – a mystic and peasant. Rasputin's perceived hold over the tsar and tsarina became a major source of anger and resentment. He did have great influence over Alexandra, and was the target of an assassination attempt in 1914. Unsuccessful that time, Rasputin was eventually assassinated in December of 1916.

> "The entire Romanov family was shot or stabbed to death"

The reign of Nicholas II was characterised by violent episodes including Russia's involvement in World War I, which resulted in the deaths of more than 3 million Russians. Nicholas's reign was also plagued by uprisings, including the Russian Revolution of 1905, and the later revolutions of 1917 that would see his power stripped away. Vladimir Lenin emerged as the leader of the Bolsheviks, a radical group formed out of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party. Nicholas was forced to abdicate on 2/15 March 1917, following the February Revolution.

With the Romanov family in an incredibly precarious position, the British government sought to offer the ill-fated family asylum in Great Britain. Yet, with the royal family of Britain itself facing dissatisfaction and controversy surrounding its Germanic roots, as well as the British population's view of Nicholas II as a tyrant, Nicholas's cousin, King George V, intervened and withdrew the offer in June in an attempt to preserve his own monarchy. In October of that same year, another revolution occurred, leading to the Bolshevik takeover and the beginning of the Soviet era.

The Romanovs were imprisoned in various places, but were finally moved to the Ipatiev House, Yekaterinburg, in the Ural Mountains. Early on the morning of 17 July 1918, the family were awakened from their sleep and told they had to be moved to a safe place. This was not the case, and they were ushered into a basement room where they were informed that the Ural Executive Committee had decided that they were to be executed. The entire Romanov family was shot or stabbed to death with bayonets. It's uncertain who gave the orders for their executions, though it seems likely to have been Lenin.

In 1991, the remains of Nicholas II, his wife, and three of their daughters - which had been missing since the execution - were uncovered and subjected to analysis. These were interred at the Peter and Paul Cathedral in Saint Petersburg in 1998. By 2000, Tsar Nicholas II and his family were canonised by the Russian Orthodox Church.

Posing here two years before he ascended the Russian throne, Nicholas II was never properly prepared for his future role as tsar

The youngest of the Romanov daughters, Anastasia's story continues to intrigue people across the world

Anastasia

b.1901-d.1918

The lost princess

Grand Duchess Anastasia, the youngest daughter of Tsar Nicholas II and his wife Alexandra, is probably the most well-known member of the Romanov family. This is due to the fact that Anastasia was the subject of great mystery from the time of her family's execution in 1918 and throughout the rest of the 20th Century.

From her birth in 1901, the second-youngest of the Romanov children - after Alexei - Anastasia was renowned for her humour, mischievous nature and energy. One of the children's nannies once claimed that Anastasia was the most charming of all the children she had met.

Along with her father, mother and siblings, Anastasia was eventually moved to Ipatiev House in Yekaterinburg, where the family and their closest aides were quickly and brutally murdered. Rumours spread widely that Anastasia somehow survived the horrific executions and escaped, perhaps with the help of a sympathetic soldier. After 1918, several women came forward claiming to be the long-lost duchess. The most famous imposter was Anna Anderson - real name Franziska Schanzkowska - whose DNA was later tested. The results proved she had no connection to the Romanovs.

As well as inspiring multiple impostors, con artists and runaways, the speculation surrounding the youngest grand duchess's possible survival sparked plenty of dramatisations and stories, including the well known animation *Anastasia*.

With the remains of the Romanov parents and three daughters found in 1991, the flames of speculation were once again fanned as to the whereabouts of the missing son and daughter. However, in 2007, the probable remains of Alexei and one of his sisters was discovered, and forensic testing a year later proved this was the case. History finally has solid proof that all of the ruling family of the Romanovs were killed in 1918.

Nicholas II: Curse of the Tsar

Nicholas II and his empress, Alexandra, shared one of history's greatest royal love stories, but they also shared responsibility for the revolution that ended the Russian throne

Three months into the Great War, Tsar Nicholas II and Tsarina Alexandra celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary. On a cold November day back in 1894, when the handsome Nicholas had married Queen Victoria's beautiful Hessian granddaughter, the future had seemed full of promise. Both were young and absolutely devoted to each other. They had first met in 1884, when her sister Elisabeth married his uncle Grand Duke Sergei - "We love each other," Nicholas had noted of the childish flirtation. They met again five years later, when Alix spent the winter of 1889 with her sister in Saint Petersburg. Nicholas was now 21, his expressive blue eyes and his slight figure sleek in a dashing military uniform, while the Hessian princess had blossomed into a statuesque 16-year-old with long golden hair and a mind filled with high ideals. They went to skating parties, danced at balls and soon the flirtation had blossomed into serious romance. "My dream is to marry Alix of Hesse," Nicholas had recorded in his diary in 1892.

It had taken years of convincing before the Lutheran Alix of Hesse agreed to change her faith and accept Nicholas's proposal: "I cannot go against my conscience," she had written to him in autumn 1893. But Nicholas persisted, and during a family wedding in April 1894, Alix finally relented. The joy of their engagement was short: in autumn 1894 Tsar Alexander III died prematurely and an overwhelmed 26-year-old Nicholas came to the throne, marrying Alix - who adopted the name Alexandra on converting to Orthodoxy - just a week after burying his father. "I love you," she had assured Nicholas the day after their wedding. "Those three words have my life in them."

That love offered comfort throughout the coming tumultuous years. In quick succession, Alexandra gave birth to four daughters, Olga, Tatiana, Maria and Anastasia, but the male heir that the couple so desperately wanted - and the succession of the imperial throne demanded - was elusive.

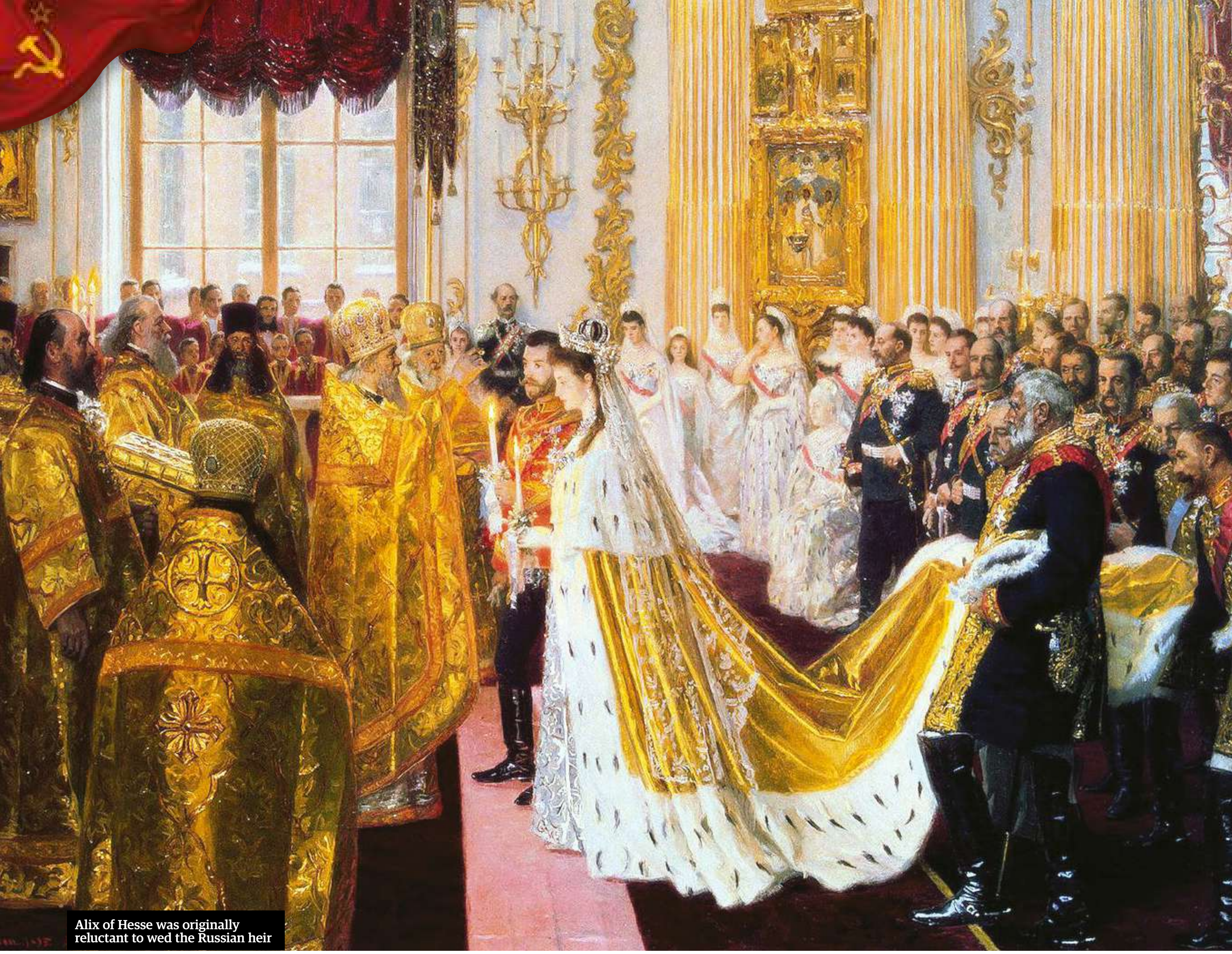
Finally in 1904, the Tsar and his wife were overjoyed when she gave birth to a son, named Alexei. However, it took less than six weeks for the first symptoms of haemophilia to appear. Alexandra had known that there was a possibility her son would carry what had become known as 'the royal disease'. The illness, passed down among the descendants of her grandmother, Queen Victoria, was devastating for the empress. There was no medical treatment, and most haemophiliacs suffered terribly before their early deaths. Nicholas accepted his only son's condition with quiet resolve:

NICHOLAS II

b.1868-d.1918

Brief Bio

The eldest son of Tsar Alexander III, Nicholas spent 22 years as the final emperor of Russia before the Bolsheviks overthrew the government and ordered the execution of the imperial family.



Alix of Hesse was originally reluctant to wed the Russian heir

> "Nicholas had never wanted to be Tsar; with his quiet, gentle character, he disliked confrontation"

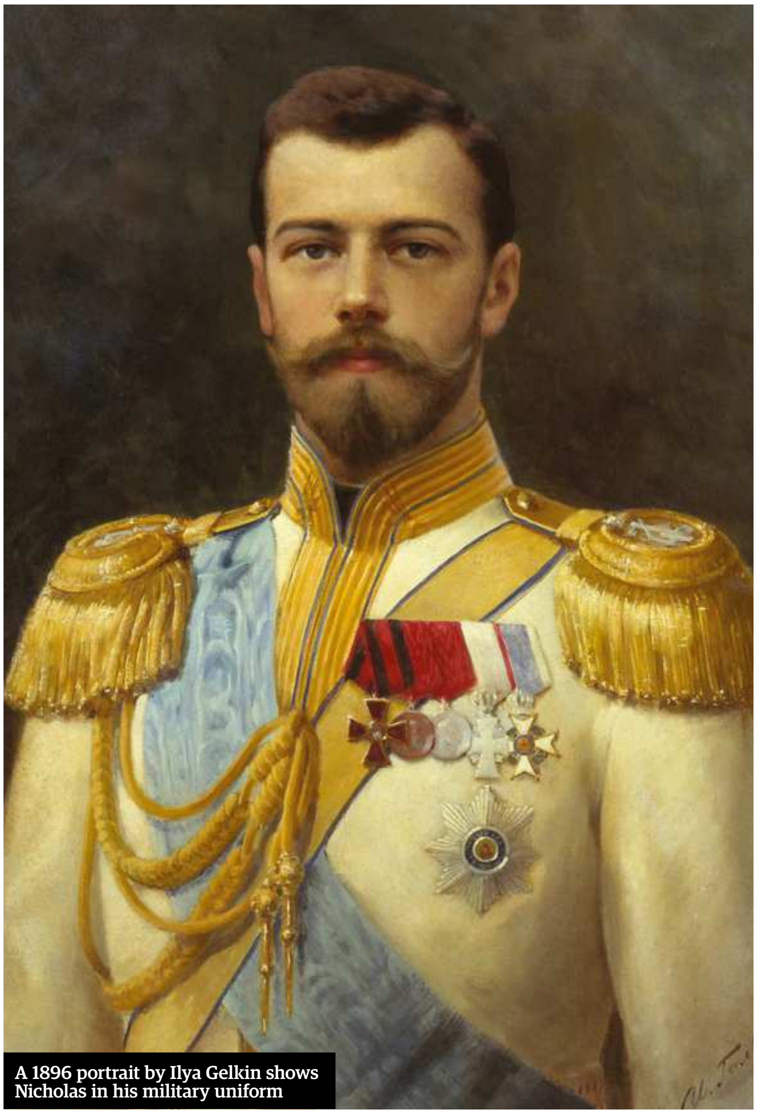
it was simply another manifestation of "God's will", unseen divine forces that, as Russia's anointed autocratic monarch, he believed dictated absolutely everything in his life.

Alexandra, though, searched for miracles. In 1905, she found her miracle worker in the notorious Grigori Rasputin, the Siberian peasant whose prayers she believed were keeping her son alive. Within a few years, the uneducated peasant was openly meddling in politics and – to the dismay of the imperial couple's loyal supporters – rampaging through the capital in a seemingly endless orgy of drunken excess that did incredible damage to the prestige of the throne.

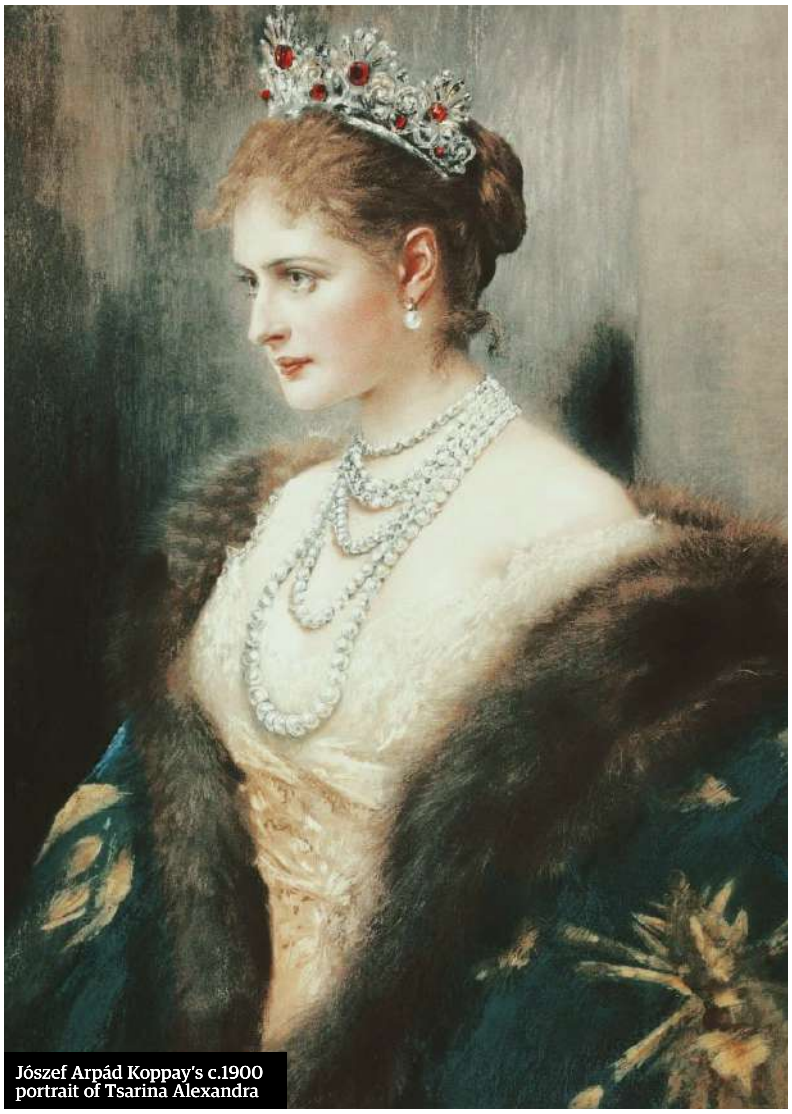
Nicholas had never wanted to be Tsar; with his quiet, gentle character, he disliked confrontation and easily gave in to demands from ambitious politicians and family members, setting his country on a disastrous course. War with Japan erupted in 1904, which was brought to an end a year later with Russia's humiliating defeat. Assassinations, pogroms and strikes swelled into a revolution in 1905 and when ultimately faced with open revolt, Nicholas was forced to grant his people a constitution and an elected parliament, the Duma, which effectively ended autocracy in Russia. Eventually, constantly worrying over Alexei's health, disillusion and continued unrest drove the imperial couple into seclusion and they all but disappeared, hiding behind the walls of their luxurious palaces, enjoying their happy family life together, but largely sacrificing the ceremonial duties that had once made the Russian Court one of the most brilliant in the world.

Much was forgiven when World War I erupted in August 1914, and millions of Russians marched

Alexandra and Nicholas II on board the Imperial Yacht Standart, at Reval, Russia



A 1896 portrait by Ilya Gelkin shows Nicholas in his military uniform



Jószef Arpád Koppay's c.1900 portrait of Tsarina Alexandra

off to join their British and French allies. The Empire had never seemed as united as it did the day Nicholas II declared war on Germany. Tens of thousands of his subjects had cheered his appearance at Saint Petersburg's Winter Palace and lustily sang the imperial anthem, *God Save The Tsar.* Nicholas patriotically changed the name of the imperial capital from the Germanic 'Saint Petersburg' to the Slavic 'Petrograd', and began spending weeks at Stavka, the Russian military headquarters some 800 miles away. Alexandra also joined the war effort, together with her eldest daughters Olga and Tatiana. She trained as a Red Cross nurse and worked in a hospital for wounded officers, assisting in operations and tending to the soldiers. Their efforts were well intentioned, but many thought that, by changing bandages and amputating limbs, the Tsarina of Russia was debasing her position.

An early Russian offensive in East Prussia quickly devolved into disastrous defeat, and it soon became apparent that the tsarist Empire was hopelessly short of adequate troop transport and munitions. At one point soldiers were even rationed to three bullets a day. In early 1915, Russian soldiers steadily advanced against the Austrians in Galicia, but the gains were temporary. An offensive launched by the Central Powers in May drove tsarist soldiers back amid devastating casualties. By summer, nearly 1.4 million Russian soldiers had been killed or wounded, with nearly 1 million more taken as prisoners of war. In August, Warsaw fell to the advancing Germans. Russia was in retreat and its army was completely demoralised.

Alexandra used the crisis to campaign against her husband's cousin Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaievich, who led the army as supreme commander. The Grand Duke had made no secret of his distaste for Rasputin, which earned the empress's wrath. In letters to her husband she insisted that the Grand Duke was always plotting, attempting to promote himself and diminish the Tsar's prestige. She urged her husband to remove the Grand Duke from power and assume supreme command himself. The Grand Duke, she repeatedly warned her husband, was, "Our friend's [Rasputin's] enemy, and that brings bad luck." Nicholas II needed little persuasion. He believed that his place was with his army. However symbolic, his presence at the front, he thought, would help to lift morale.

Nicholas had no practical experience in military tactics or leadership, and his decision to remove Nikolaievich from command horrified many. Ten of the thirteen members of the Council of Ministers submitted their resignations in protest, but an angry Nicholas simply dismissed their concerns. The Tsar's mother, Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna, was in total despair. "This is not at all like Nicky!" she cried. "He is lovable, he is honest, he is good." Instead she put all of the blame at the feet of her daughter-in-law Alexandra, "It is all her work."

Nicholas left for Stavka to assume Supreme Command carrying a triumphant letter from his wife, who assured him that Rasputin had blessed the decision. "Our friend's prayers arise night and day for you to Heaven," she wrote to her husband, "and God will hear them. It is the beginning of the glory of your reign. Our friend said so and I absolutely believe it." In fact, it was the beginning of the end, but neither Nicholas nor Alexandra perceived the dangers that lay ahead.

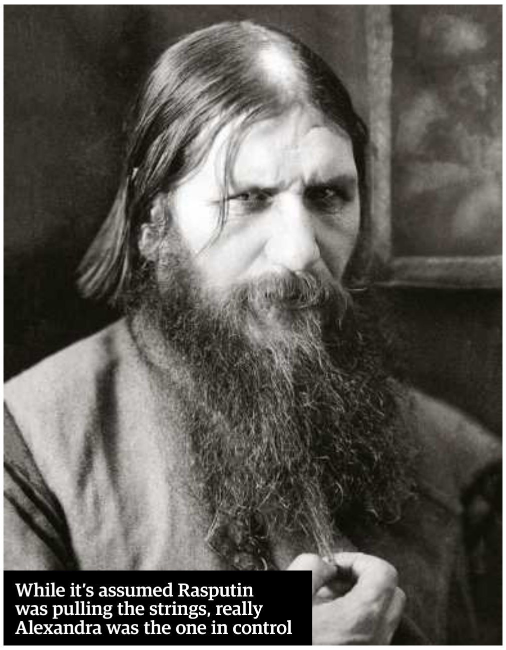
With Nicholas at army headquarters, Alexandra soon became the face of imperial power. The Tsar made governmental decisions but those decisions were often influenced and coerced by his wife.

A 1913 group portrait of the Tsar and his family

Alexandra assured Nicholas that she had "trousers on, unseen," and was ready to lead the government in his absence. Armed with undying earnestness and convinced of the superiority of her intellect, she plunged forward in an effort to be "useful".

Alexandra's understanding of her adopted homeland was abysmal. "Russia loves to feel the whip," she insisted to Nicholas, "it's in their nature." She would say that the country was fortunate to have "a real anointed sovereign." She never accepted the fact her husband had been forced to end the autocracy in 1905, and continually warned Nicholas that a constitutional government, with a ministry responsible to the people, not to the throne, would "be Russia's ruin." The Tsar should "be more decided and self-confident" and "show your own mind." He should be "Peter the Great, Ivan the Terrible, Emperor Paul - crush them all under you!" Yet she protested whenever Nicholas voiced an opinion that was different than her own. She didn't want him to be more autocratic; she wanted him to be more obedient to her will. Nicholas, she candidly said, "is weak, but I am not." The Tsar had lived with such rebukes for two decades. Alexandra had never been shy in warning him of his perceived character deficiencies and prodding him to become the man she wished him to be. Though well meant, she actually undermined her husband's fragile self-esteem. By the last weeks of his reign, Nicholas had taken to repeatedly signing off his letters to his wife with, "Your weak-willed hubby." In attempting to reshape her husband according to her own desires, Alexandra made Nicholas entirely dependent on her and her opinions.

A deadly self-delusion soon took hold. Alexandra scattered Rasputin's name throughout her letters, but she was the dominant partner in their relationship. The hysterical empress in thrall to the Siberian peasant who dictated government appointments is a myth. Rasputin was crafty enough to sense what Alexandra wanted and simply parroted back her own views when quizzed on politicians and policies. She then used Rasputin's name to wrap her opinions in a mantle



While it's assumed Rasputin was pulling the strings, really Alexandra was the one in control

ВѢЧНАЯ ПАМЯТЬ
ПОГИБШИМЪ
БОРЦАМЪ ЗА СВОБОДУ.
18

A mourning ceremony for victims of the February Revolution, Russia, 1917

The February Revolution

Russia quickly turned on its emperor after cold-blooded murder drove his soldiers to join the strikers and revolt

Disgust and desperation drove the Russian Revolution. A general strike brought angry workers opposing the war together with disillusioned students and the dispossessed on Petrograd's streets in February (OS)/March (NS) 1917. The first signs of trouble came when Cossacks, called out to break up the demonstrations, refused to turn their whips on the wretches waiting for food. By 25 February/10 March, with the capital paralysed, Nicholas II ordered General Nicholas Khabalov, military commander of Petrograd to "end the disorders." The general's troops opened fire on the crowds, killing 169 people and injuring thousands. The peace, won by terror, is illusory. Soldiers, sickened by having shot the demonstrators, began to revolt, murdering their officers and declaring allegiance to the revolution. The elite Imperial Guards Regiments deserted as chaos swept the city. Mobs burned buildings and ransacked shops in search of food; across the capital, crowds attacked police and angrily tore down the double-headed eagle emblems of the Romanov dynasty. By 27 February/13 March, with government officials openly siding with the revolt, the Duma declared itself head of a Provisional Government. It took just days for the revolution to succeed.

of divine sanction to her husband. It all meshed with emotional ideas that her marriage was some sort of religious mission, but in reality it was an abusive mixture of faith and politics. The tragedy is that Alexandra never realised what she was doing, and no one was strong enough to stop her.

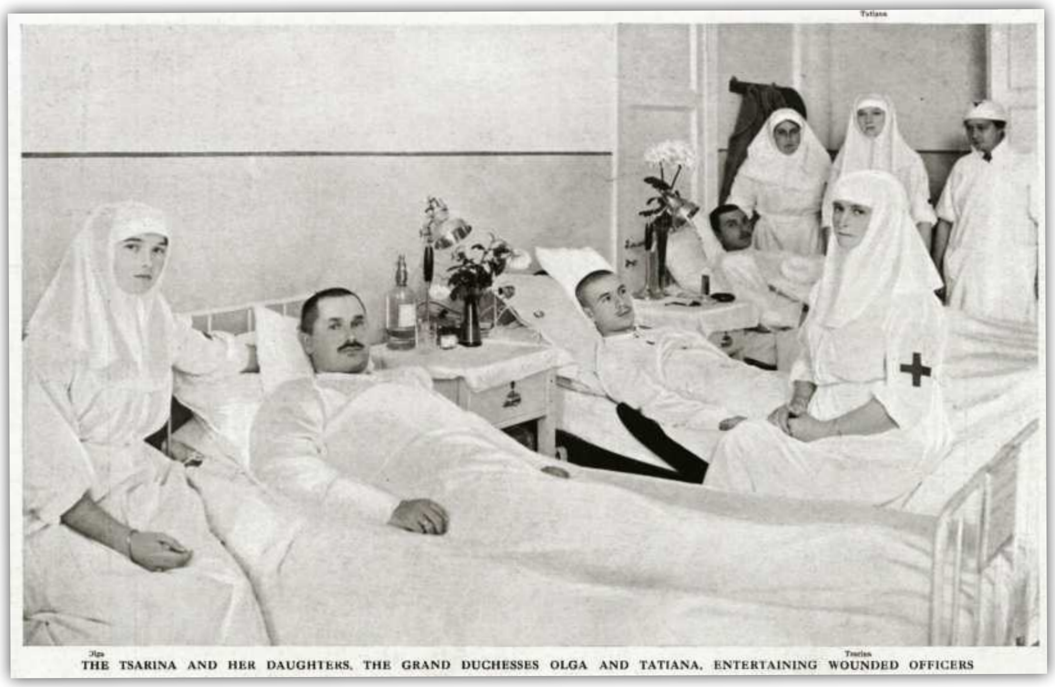
Officials came, went, and were reshuffled for no apparent reason in a shocking and disreputable display that left the country paralysed. In 18 months – from September 1915 to the Revolution – Russia had four prime ministers, five ministers of the interior, four ministers of agriculture, four ministers of religion, three ministers of war, and three foreign ministers. Nicholas seemed unable to resist his wife's suggestions, which were often little short of demands, even when he knew her proposals would have catastrophic consequences.

Such was the case with Alexander Protopopov, who became minister of the interior in September 1916. Protopopov mumbled to himself, twitched and shouted obscenities at the voices in his head. Suffering from syphilis and slowly going insane, he had already been confined to asylums but nevertheless, Alexandra wanted him appointed to the second highest office in the land. When Nicholas resisted, she used Rasputin's name: "He likes our friend for four years, and that says much about a man," she wrote to Nicholas, yet the Tsar was uncertain. "Our friend's ideas about men are sometimes queer," he warned. "All these changes exhaust the head. They happen much too often." Alexandra refused to back down and Nicholas gave in against his better judgment.

Accusations of treason fell across the Russian capital like the first flakes of snow blanketing Petrograd in the autumn of 1916. The country was spiralling into chaos. Discontent in the army, the endless succession of ministerial appointments, moral disintegration among the Orthodox hierarchy, and the shadow of Rasputin all coalesced into a growing hatred against the Romanov dynasty in general, and Nicholas – especially Alexandra – in particular. Watching the latest newsreels of the imperial couple in a cinema, one British visitor to Russia was shocked when the audience erupted in hisses when the empress appeared on screen.

No rumour was too bizarre. Before her marriage Alexandra had been a German princess, so many Russians openly questioned her loyalties and

> "By the last weeks of his reign, Nicholas had taken to repeatedly signing off his letters to his wife with 'Your weak-willed hubby'"


Tatiana
Olga
Tatiana
THE TSARINA AND HER DAUGHTERS, THE GRAND DUCHESSES OLGA AND TATIANA, ENTERTAINING WOUNDED OFFICERS

During the war effort, the Tsarina and her daughters trained as nurses for the Red Cross and worked in a hospital for wounded soldiers, assisting operations and amputations

Emperor Nicholas II and Grand Duke Nikolay Nikolayevich marching with troops at Staff HQ

spread tales that she was secretly working to negotiate a separate peace with her cousin Kaiser Wilhelm II. The empress, it was said, believed herself to be a second Catherine the Great - another German princess come to Russia - and, like her, planned to kill her husband and seize his throne for herself. Obscene pamphlets and cartoons showed the Tsarina and Rasputin; people believed that he slept with Alexandra and her four young daughters. "Rasputin, Rasputin, Rasputin - it was like a refrain," recalled Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna. "The word 'revolution' was everywhere."

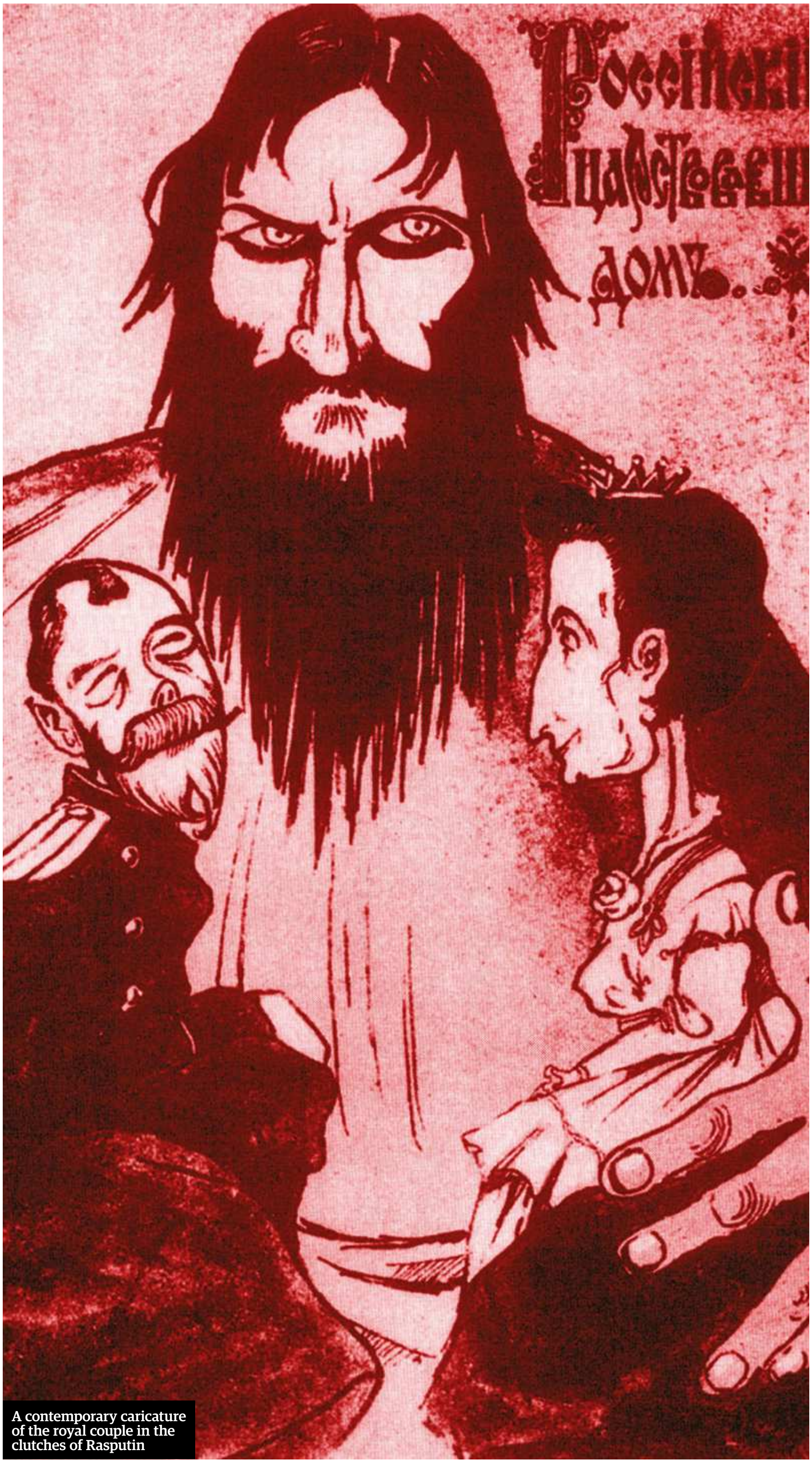
Relatives warned of the impending crisis but to no avail. Three Grand Dukes went to Nicholas that autumn, imploring him to grant a responsible ministry. But such an idea was beyond Nicholas's comprehension: "I'd have to forget everything in my life," he once said on hearing such a proposal. "I cannot make a decision that goes against my own conscience. If I did so, I would be unable to believe that I was responsible before God." The Tsar was equally unreceptive to those who begged him to ignore the empress's advice. "I believe no one but my wife!" was his cold response. When Alexandra's sister Elisabeth visited the Tsarina in December, she warned that Rasputin was destroying the dynasty. "Remember the fate of Louis XVI!" the Grand Duchess cried. But the empress arose and told her to leave. "She drove me away like a dog," Elisabeth later wept.

On the morning of 17/30 December 1916, the telephone beside Alexandra's chaise in her famous Mauve Boudoir jingled to life. The empress was stunned; Rasputin was missing. "Our friend has disappeared!" she wrote to her husband at headquarters. The previous evening, Rasputin had gone out with Prince Felix Yusupov, one of Russia's wealthiest aristocrats and husband of Nicholas II's only Russian niece. The prince denied that he had anything to do with the man's disappearance, but

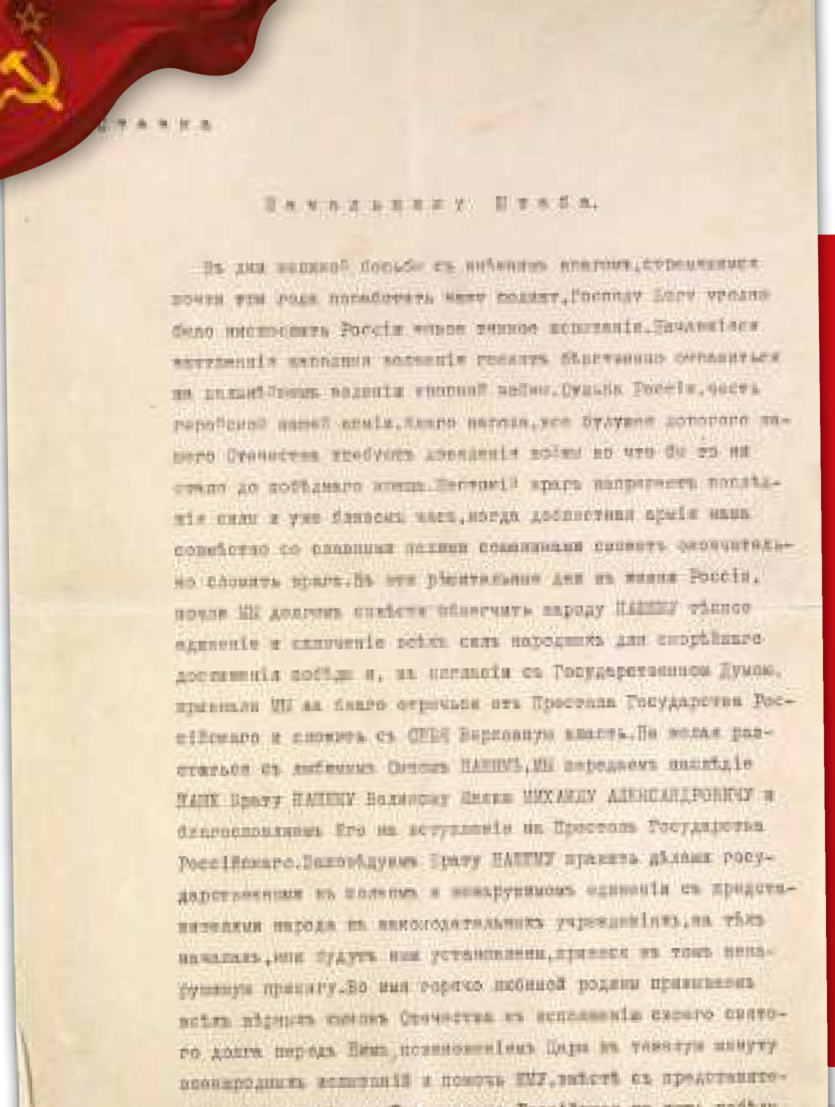
before long the story unravelled in all its grisly, theatrical detail. After having been poisoned, shot and stabbed, Rasputin had been hurled into a frozen river. His death came too late to make any difference, but it did have one unfortunate and unsuspected effect: it divided the imperial couple from their censorious relatives and drove them further into suspicious isolation.

Officials who met Nicholas in the weeks after the murder found the Tsar unrecognisable. His cheeks were hollow, his eyes were listless and he was unable to answer even the simplest of questions that were put to him. For 22 years he had been assailed from all sides with advice, warnings and orders that had left him close to a nervous breakdown, while doses of cocaine,

“The Tsar’s cheeks were hollow, his eyes were listless and he was unable to answer even the simplest of questions that were put to him”



A contemporary caricature of the royal couple in the clutches of Rasputin

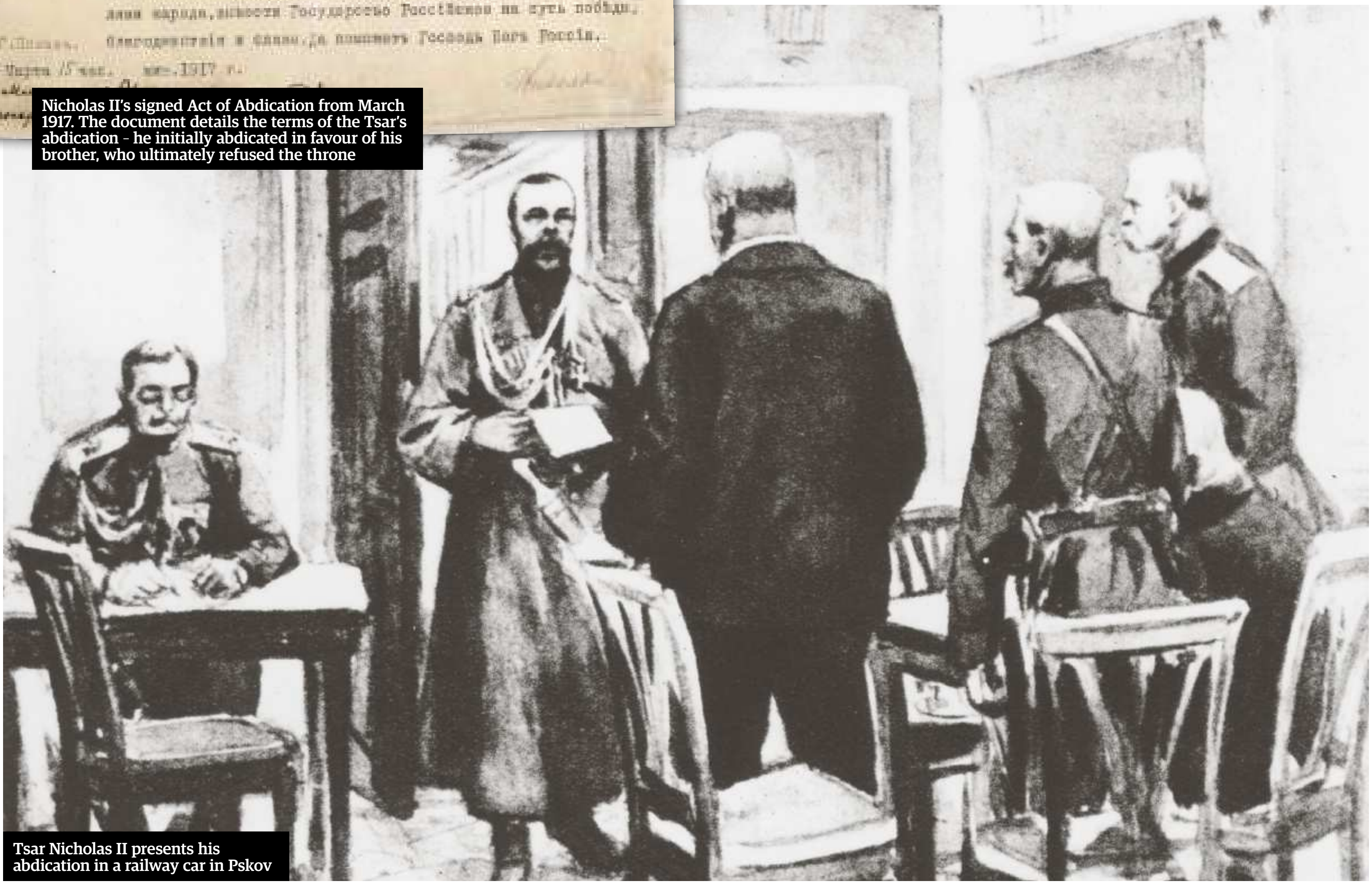


Nicholas II's signed Act of Abdication from March 1917. The document details the terms of the Tsar's abdication - he initially abdicated in favour of his brother, who ultimately refused the throne

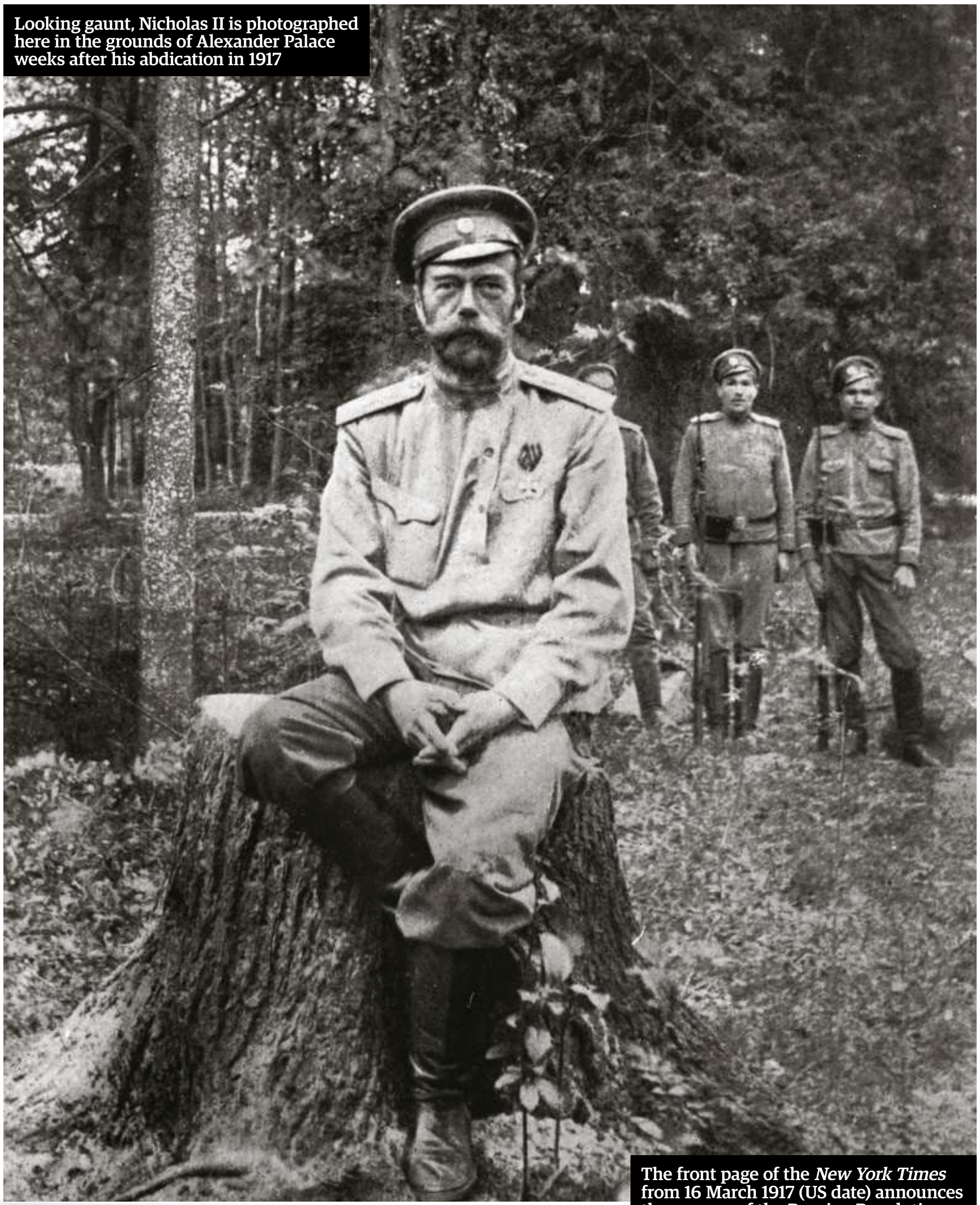
Nicholas II's abdication

After losing the support of his generals, the Tsar abdicated in favour of the wrong person, ultimately bringing to an end the 304 year reign of his family's dynasty

Nicholas II had lived through strikes and demonstrations before; viewing them as treasonous, he had managed to somehow ride out the difficulties, and he had expected to do so again in 1917. Isolated at military headquarters, he had only intermittent and conflicting news of the disorders in Petrograd. On 26 February/11 March, a telegram from Michael Rodzianko, president of the Duma, warned of "anarchy in the capital," but a letter from Alexandra assured her husband that "everyone remains devoted to you." Nicholas decided that the president was exaggerating, saying, "That fat Rodzianko has sent me more nonsense to which I shall not bother to reply." But by 27 February/12 March, when Rodzianko, the State Council and Alexandra all warned that the situation was serious, Nicholas decided to return to his capital. His train took a circuitous route north and, hoping to avoid rebels, was diverted to the town of Pskov. Here, on the afternoon of 2/15 March, he learned that the new Provisional Government, as well as the army high command, was demanding his abdication. Having lost the support of his generals, not wanting to impede the war effort, and unwilling to launch his country into a civil war, the Tsar – tired, disillusioned and mentally exhausted – agreed to renounce the throne. Initially he abdicated in favour of his 12-year-old son Alexei, but he changed his mind after considering the haemophiliac boy's fragile condition. Instead he abdicated in favour of his brother Grand Duke Michael. This was illegal – not even the Tsar had the right to renounce the succession rights of his heir – but no one challenged him. At 11.40pm that night, Nicholas signed an abdication manifesto that ended with the words, "May the Lord God save Russia." In his diary, he recorded bitterly: "All around me I see treachery, cowardice and deceit." The next day, when Grand Duke Michael refused to accept the throne, the 304-year-old Romanov dynasty came to an end.



Tsar Nicholas II presents his abdication in a railway car in Pskov



Looking gaunt, Nicholas II is photographed here in the grounds of Alexander Palace weeks after his abdication in 1917

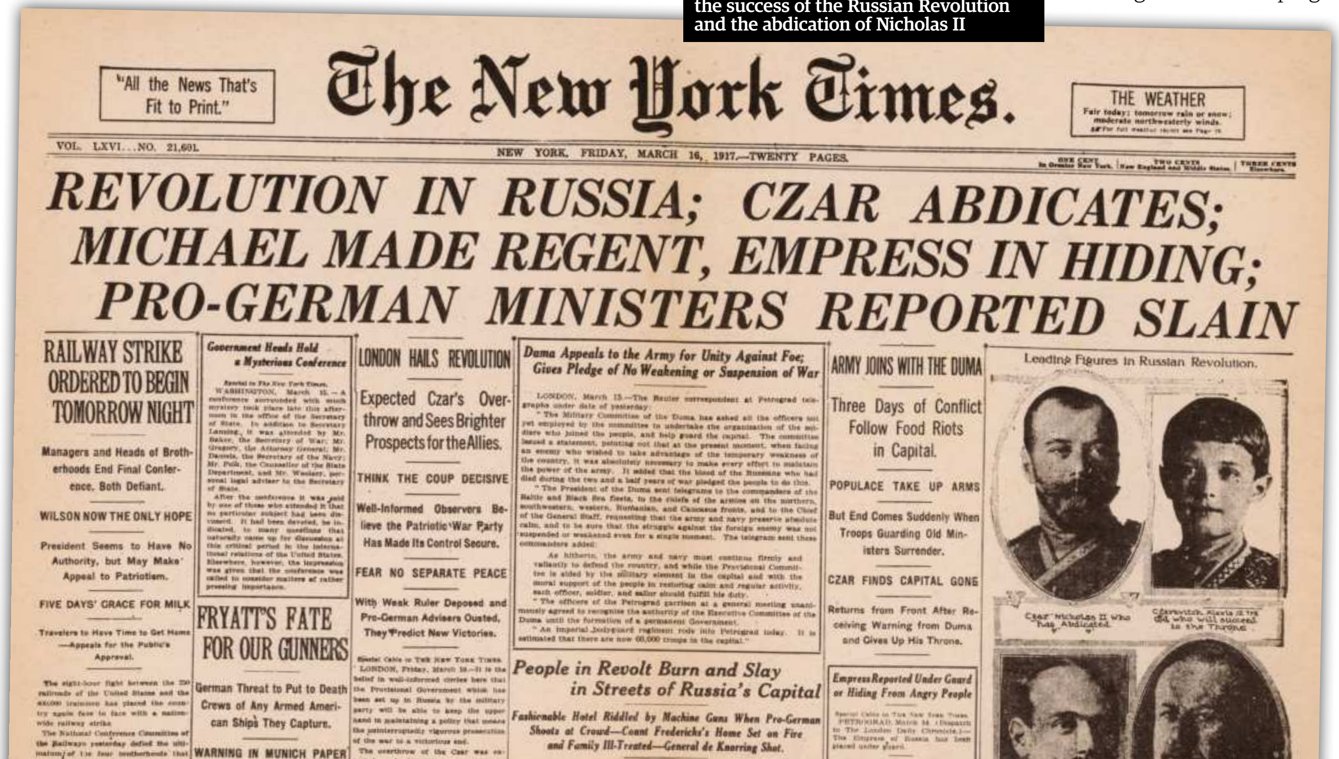
> "Food and fuel were scarce. Long lines of the Tsar's subjects filled the streets, standing in frigid weather hoping for flour or some heating oil"

hashish and opium for toothaches and stomach pains increasingly left the Tsar in a mental haze. "He is no longer seriously interested in anything," complained one courtier. "He has become quite apathetic. He goes through his daily routine like an automaton." The French ambassador left his last meeting convinced that the Tsar "has lost faith in his mission, and that he has abdicated inwardly and is now resigned to disaster."

People whispered of conspiracy. It was said that guards units would soon arrest Alexandra, depose Nicholas and declare the young Alexei as the new Tsar of Russia. Members of the government pondered seizing the Tsar's train and forcing him to abdicate in favour of his son. When Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna begged her son to send Alexandra away so she could no longer interfere with political affairs, Nicholas abruptly dismissed his mother and she subsequently fled to Kiev. Grand Dukes sat in cafés, openly declaring that to save the dynasty from ruin, the Tsar would have to be sacrificed.

On 22 February/7 March, Nicholas left his capital to return to headquarters. Food and fuel were scarce. Long lines of the Tsar's desperate subjects filled the streets of Petrograd, standing in frigid weather hoping to collect a bag of flour or a container of heating oil. Nearly 100,000 striking factory workers soon joined them, shouting, "Down with the war! Down with the autocracy!"

Over the next week, discontent swelled into revolution. By the time Nicholas returned to his palace, it was as a prisoner, unknowingly having doomed himself and his family to a bloody end in a Siberian cellar at the hands of the Bolsheviks just over a year later.



The front page of the *New York Times* from 16 March 1917 (US date) announces the success of the Russian Revolution and the abdication of Nicholas II

"All the News That's Fit to Print."

The New York Times.

THE WEATHER

Fair today; tomorrow rain or snow; moderate northwesterly winds.

VOL. LXVI...NO. 21,601. NEW YORK, FRIDAY, MARCH 16, 1917.—TWENTY PAGES.

REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA; CZAR ABDICATES; MICHAEL MADE REGENT, EMPRESS IN HIDING; PRO-GERMAN MINISTERS REPORTED SLAIN

RAILWAY STRIKE ORDERED TO BEGIN TOMORROW NIGHT

Managers and Heads of Brotherhoods End Final Conference. Both Defiant.

WILSON NOW THE ONLY HOPE

President Seems to Have No Authority, but May Make Appeal to Patriotism.

FIVE DAYS' GRACE FOR MILK

Travelers to Have Time to Get Home—Appeals for the Public's Approval.

Government Heads Hold a Mysterious Conference

FRYATT'S FATE FOR OUR GUNNERS

German Threat to Put to Death Crews of Any Armed American Ships They Capture.

WARNING IN MUNICH PAPER

LONDON HAILS REVOLUTION

Expected Czar's Overthrow and Sees Brighter Prospects for the Allies.

THINK THE COUP DECISIVE

Well-Informed Observers Believe the Patriotic War Party Has Made Its Control Secure.

FEAR NO SEPARATE PEACE

With Weak Ruler Deposed and Pro-German Advisers Ousted, They Predict New Victories.

Duma Appeals to the Army for Unity Against Foe; Gives Pledge of No Weakening or Suspension of War

People in Revolt Burn and Slay in Streets of Russia's Capital

Fashionable Hotel Riddled by Machine Guns When Pro-German Shoots at Crowd—Count Frederichs's Home Set on Fire and Family Ill-Treated—General de Knorring Shot.

ARMY JOINS WITH THE DUMA

Three Days of Conflict Follow Food Riots in Capital.

POPULACE TAKE UP ARMS

But End Comes Suddenly When Troops Guarding Old Ministers Surrender.

CZAR FINDS CAPITAL GONE

Returns from Front After Receiving Warning from Duma and Gives Up His Throne.

Empress Reported Under Guard or Hiding From Angry People

Leading Figures in Russian Revolution.

Czar Nicholas II who has Abdicated.

© Alamy, Getty Images, GARF/State Archive of the Russian Federation

INSIDE THE TWISTED MIND OF RUSSIA'S 'MAD MONK'

RASPUTIN

- How he gained the trust of Russian royalty
- Uncover his role in the fall of a dynasty
- The gruesome murder

For a long time in Russia it was believed that the name Rasputin meant 'licentious', and it was this image of the man that became the most prevalent. Rasputin was an accused sexual deviant, a rapist, and 'Mad Monk' who played the Russian royals like keys on a piano and whispered dark urges into the Tsarina's ear. Rasputin, however, does not mean licentious at all. Its meaning is closer to 'Where two rivers meet', referring to the place where he was born.

Just like the meaning of his name, the true Rasputin, the man who lived and breathed, has been lost to history and replaced with caricatures; an old man with a long scraggly beard, terrible teeth and even more terrible deeds - but also a doting father, a respected holy man and a lover of beauty. It is this duality that has confounded and caused debates to this day. Was he indeed the man who brought a Russian dynasty to its knees, or has history created a scapegoat out of a man who only ever acted with good intentions?

The village of Pokrovskoye was small even by Siberian standards. It was more like a remote scattering of houses in the wide expanse of the West Siberian plains. With only 200 dwellings and no more than a thousand residents, it was an incredibly isolated start for the man whom every citizen of Russia would come to know, fear and loathe. But it was in this quiet, sleepy peasant village that Grigori Rasputin was born. The fifth of nine children, from a very early age Rasputin did not fit in. He did not attend school, for there was no school for him to attend, and he soon fell into a life of debauchery and drunkenness. The peasants of the close-knit village did not trust the strange boy, and he was an outsider even in his place of birth. He found the backbreaking labour of peasant work boring and empty, and he was alleged to have stolen horses, fences - anything to add colour to his dull existence.

The young Rasputin was not a fool; he did not live a life of crime due to incompetence, but instead because of a feeling that his life was lacking something. He had a wife, he even had children, but he still felt a gaping emptiness. Now in his twenties, he found himself, either through divine providence or banishment, at the newly expanded Verkhoturye Monastery. It was there that he met Starets Makary, an elder who lived a humble existence in the woods near the monastery. Rasputin's interactions with this holy man slowly transformed the rebel youth into a deeply spiritual individual. Rasputin gave up alcohol, tobacco and meat. When he returned to Pokrovskoye, the rebellious criminal had been transformed into a fervent religious convert.

> "The true Rasputin, the man who lived and breathed, has been lost to history and replaced with caricatures"

Faith or fake?

Alexandra believed Rasputin cured her son with faith-healing, but it's one of many explanations

The wrong drugs

Aspirin was in use at the time and it is likely it was administered to the heir to help reduce his pain. Rasputin may have rejected the use of this drug, and by doing so unintentionally helped the boy, as aspirin thins the blood and would have worsened Alexei's condition.

Calming presence

As a holy man it is not out of the question to assume that Rasputin brought a calm, tranquil air to both Alexandra and her son. This reduced stress may have helped the bleeding to gradually slow and stop.

Drugging

A popular theory at the time was that Rasputin was drugging Alexei with Tibetan herbs. This theory was fuelled by the disconnect people felt towards the imperial family.

Good timing

Others believed Rasputin to be less occult and more cunning. It was argued that he had a confidante at the court, a lady-in-waiting, who fed him information about Alexei, and when the boy was on the mend the healer made an appearance to claim the credit.

Hypnosis

The court physician at the time, Botkin, fiercely disliked Rasputin and claimed he had used hypnosis on the child, whispering words into his ear and inducing the bleeding to stop.

People from all walks of life seemed to be drawn to Rasputin; he is seen here surrounded by admirers

Rasputin had been inspired by Makary but not by the monastery. Not only did he accuse the place of practising a "vice", which was likely homosexuality, he also later proclaimed that the monastic life was not for him, saying, "One finds violence over people there." He believed that only by venturing across the world could he truly become closer to God and salvation. Throughout his life, Rasputin had never been one to sit idly, and he was definitely not accustomed to bowing to authority and blindly following orders, so it is not surprising he was repulsed by a life of servitude in a cold stone building. Rasputin, after all, did not belong in small places, or behind locked doors. His ever-wandering heart wished to explore the vastness of the Earth, and that's exactly what he set about doing.

Rasputin packed few belongings, wished his family goodbye and began the life of a strannik, or mystical wanderer. We do not know the extent or length of Rasputin's various pilgrimages at this stage of his life, but it is possible that he travelled as far as Mount Athos, the centre of the Orthodox Church. Sometimes he did not come back home for years, and his own wife and children struggled to recognise the man that returned. However, even in the life of a strannik Rasputin began to carve his own path. He disliked abiding by the accepted norms, preferring to do things his own way. For example, he would refuse to wear the traditional fetters and instead wore the same shirt for an entire year. He was rebellious and headstrong, but he was also thoughtful, independent and astonishingly open-minded for a peasant from a tiny village.

During these years of wandering Rasputin encountered many different kinds of people from all branches of the Russian social order. He developed strong opinions but also discovered and refined his ability to read people. Many have commented in memoirs and elsewhere that what Rasputin possessed was a very unique magnetism. He had a talent for understanding people quickly, he knew exactly what to say to them and he was unlike any priest or holy man they had encountered. This is because it was the truth – Rasputin was different, he had not confined himself to books and monasteries, but to the real world, and real people. When he spoke about God it was with a meaning that normal people could understand and his own beliefs were strengthened not simply with study, but with vivid, electric and very real experiences.

This 'magnetism' began to draw people to Rasputin's home. Villagers and pilgrims from further afield travelled to sit, talk, pray and seek council from the man. He soon amassed a loyal group of followers who would meet regularly to read from the Bible and sing religious songs in a secret chapel – a cave beneath the stables created by Rasputin himself. However, as these meetings grew in popularity, Rasputin also attracted negative attention. Rumours quickly spread that he was often seen with young women, that his followers would bathe him, and that he was teaching them mysterious rituals.

Rasputin was especially despised by the resident priest of Pokrovskoye, who likely didn't relish the idea of an upstart peasant gaining such popularity

over himself and his own teachings. Due to all this attention, Rasputin's meetings were abandoned and the priest probably thought that was the end of it, but little did he know Rasputin had only just begun to scratch the surface of the power and influence he held.

When Rasputin announced his intentions to travel to St Petersburg, he was warned by a fellow holy man that "the city will ruin you", but he ignored the warning; he had set his heart on a single mission, and nobody could dissuade him. Although Rasputin was a worldly man he was completely unprepared for the city, and it could have easily swallowed him. Fortunately his work had not gone unnoticed and he bore a letter of recommendation that granted him access to Bishop Sergei, the rector of the St Petersburg Seminary. Through association with Sergei, Rasputin became known to the curious elite of St Petersburg, where the counts and countesses were fascinated by the bedraggled travelling man with his soft, strong words and strange allure. Many of the aristocracy, painfully bored with their structured, weary lives, found his peculiar ways amusing, like wearing his hair long and the way he kissed women when first meeting them. The outsider was a curiosity, a talking point and almost a party piece.

Soon the aristocracy were introducing him to their friends, and the name Rasputin became known to anyone who was anyone in the capital. After befriending Princess Milica of Montenegro and her sister Anastasia, Rasputin was then introduced by them to the two most powerful figures in the whole of Russia - the Tsar and the Tsarina, Nicholas II and Alexandra. Rasputin had used his powerful words and enchanting nature to climb from the bottom rungs of Russian society to the very top.

Rasputin's arrival in the lives of the Imperial family could not have been better timed if he had planned it himself. Russia was in a state of disarray; they had lost a war against Japan in devastating fashion, humiliating the country on the world stage. The Tsar also had to deal with the fallout after Bloody Sunday - where hundreds, if not thousands, of peaceful protestors were massacred by the Imperial Guard. Although Nicholas himself had not

> "The outsider was a curiosity… and almost a party piece"

The power of the mystic

Historian Douglas Smith discusses the growing interest in the occult, and how this aided Rasputin's rise to power

Douglas Smith is an award-winning historian and translator. He is the author of six books on Russia, including *Rasputin: Faith, Power, and the Twilight of the Romanovs*. To learn more, visit www.douglassmith.info

Just how widespread was the Russian upper-class fascination with mysticism?

The turn of the century was a period of intense spiritual searching in Russia. During what became known as Russia's Silver Age, from roughly 1890 to 1914, the country's educated classes exhibited a fascination for mysticism and the occult and all manner of the supernatural, from table turning, hypnotism, and chiromancy, to Rosicrucianism, fortune-telling, telepathy, and Theosophy. Hypnotism was more popular in early 20th century Russia than in Western Europe and was a particularly common practice among St Petersburg psychiatrists. The best-known psychiatrist-hypnotist at the time was Vladimir Bekhterev, who used hypnosis widely as part of his science of 'psychoneurology.' The fascination for the occult became widespread, extending well beyond Russia's artists and intellectuals and reaching deeply into the middle classes.

How and why did this obsession with the occult grow among Russian aristocrats?

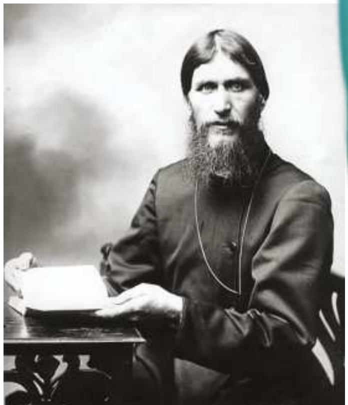
Most educated Russians began turning away from the materialist positivism of the 19th century and back to the church and other forms of spiritualism in what can be called a true religious renaissance. Many sought to revitalise what was widely perceived as a hidebound, bureaucratic, and spiritually dead official Russian Orthodox Church, to infuse it with a renewed sense of mystery, fervency, and life. Others rejected the church altogether for new forms of spiritual experience that held the promise of even more powerful encounters with the sacred.

Did this religious renaissance help Rasputin gain influence over the imperial family?

This religious renaissance is crucial to understanding the rise of Rasputin. On one hand, his biography reflects this moment in Russian history. He himself had some sort of profound religious experience in his late twenties and he left home in Siberia to become what the Russians call a strannik, a holy pilgrim. For years he wandered in rags and often in fetters across the empire to various holy places and holy men in search of spiritual enlightenment. This was his university, so to speak, and in time he became known for his profound knowledge of scripture and insights into Christian teachings and human nature. He was embraced in St Petersburg by lofty bishops and members of the Romanov family as a charismatic peasant holy man in whom burned the true unvarnished Orthodox faith. It was they who introduced Rasputin to Nicholas and Alexandra, thus opening his path to the throne.

Was Rasputin as much a mystic as the public perceived him to be or were his aims more political?

From the beginning of his relationship with Nicholas and Alexandra, Rasputin offered not only religious teachings, but political counsel as well. They first met during the Revolution of 1905, and Rasputin instructed the tsar to remain firm and not give in to the demands for political change. In the summer of 1914, Rasputin wrote a remarkable letter to Nicholas, begging him to ignore the voices of the warmongers and resist the temptation to go to war. In apocalyptic terms, Rasputin wrote he foresaw "ruin" and "grief without end." Nicholas, of course, did not heed this prophetic advice. In late 1916, not long before his murder, Rasputin pleaded with Nicholas to do something about the growing bread lines in the capital. He told the tsar the people were hungry and growing angry. Nothing, however, was done, and soon these same people would spark a revolt that would bring down the 300-year-old dynasty of the Romanovs.



In addition to religious counsel, Rasputin advised on political topics given the order to fire, for many it condemned the Tsar, who they had, until the massacre, regarded as a 'father'. The Imperial family were facing a brutal backlash and there was a very real chance of them losing their grip on the country entirely. Rasputin sat and listened to Alexandra's worries and they spoke at length about religion. The holy man calmly told her that her husband needed to be closer to his people, and that she could trust his words. Alexandra immediately became close to Rasputin, as she too had a strong belief in the strength of the dynasty, and believed that he had been sent by God to secure the strength of their royal line.

Alexandra's trust in Rasputin meant that when her son, Alexei, suffered from one of his haemophilic bleeding episodes, she summoned him immediately. The boy was the Imperial family's only male heir, and his mother adored and doted on him. Alexandra was well aware of the seriousness of his condition; she had lost an uncle and brother to the same hereditary disease, passed down from her grandmother Queen Victoria, and it is likely she knew that it would claim her son, too. Alexei became a symbol of the future of Russian royalty - to save him was also to save tsardom. Alexandra had spoken to many doctors and tried multiple cures for her son's disease but nothing had worked, and so in her moment of need, with her child dangerously close to death, she called upon the mystic holy man.

Rasputin came to the palace, began to pray by the boy's bed and amazingly, seemed to be able to calm the child, his condition rapidly improving. In another incident, Alexei sustained an injury and lay suffering and moaning for days. Alexandra, remembering how Rasputin had managed to ease her child previously, sent a telegram to the man. Rasputin quickly responded to her worries: "The little one will not die. Do not allow the doctors to bother him too much." Just as he said, the boy's health went on to improve, and Alexandra became convinced Rasputin was responsible for his recovery. The wandering mystic's place in the royal household was secured.

Although Rasputin's role was primarily as a healer to Alexei, he became a close confidant of the family, even occasionally serving as an advisor to the Tsar himself. For example, he warned Nicholas about the perils of entering World War I, urging him to make peace with Germany instead. Nicholas, of course, went along with the war anyway, which was a huge, costly mistake for the country and a hugely damaging to his own, already precarious reputation. However, Rasputin's easy access and apparent influence over the household did not go unnoticed. Living in an apartment on Gorokhovaya Street, Rasputin was frequently visited by peasants seeking assistance, but even more so by the aristocracy, many of whom planned to use him to gain their own favour at court.

There were others, however, who were less than fond of the strange peasant. Malicious rumours concerning Rasputin began to resurge - that he seduced women with his charm, using his power to organise secret sex rituals. For many who had met the 'Mad Monk' in passing, these claims were not out of the question, as he was seen to be overly intimate with women, and his eyes, by all accounts, were oddly hypnotising. One memoir from the period wrote of Rasputin: "What eyes he has! You cannot endure his gaze for long. There is something difficult in him, it is like you can feel the physical pressure, even though his eyes sometimes glow with kindness, but how cruel can they be and how frightful in anger..." Many who had first adored the curious man were swept up in the hate campaign against him.

> "Alexei became a symbol of the future of Russian royalty"

Some of Rasputin's enemies went to Nicholas and Alexandra directly to warn them of his influence, but both were quick to dismiss them. When Nicholas was urged to exile him to Tobolsk he commented, "I know Rasputin too well to

The men who killed Rasputin

Pushed to the edge of desperation, these men formed a conspiracy to put an end to Rasputin once and for all

Felix Yusupov

Coming from an extremely wealthy family - richer than the Romanovs - Felix was the oldest surviving male heir to this huge fortune. Although he was clever and quick-witted, he faced criticism for avoiding service during World War I. As the husband of Alexander Romanov's niece, Princess Irina of Russia, he disliked the influence that Rasputin held over the family, and became a key player in the plot to bring about his downfall.

Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich

Dmitri was grandson of Alexander II of Russia and after his primary carer, his uncle, was killed by a revolutionary attack, he went to live with the Romanovs. He was known to be something of a playboy and these actions likely ruined plans for him to marry the eldest Romanov daughter, Olga. In his later life he moved to Paris and had an affair with Coco Chanel.

Vladimir Mitrofanovich Purishkevich

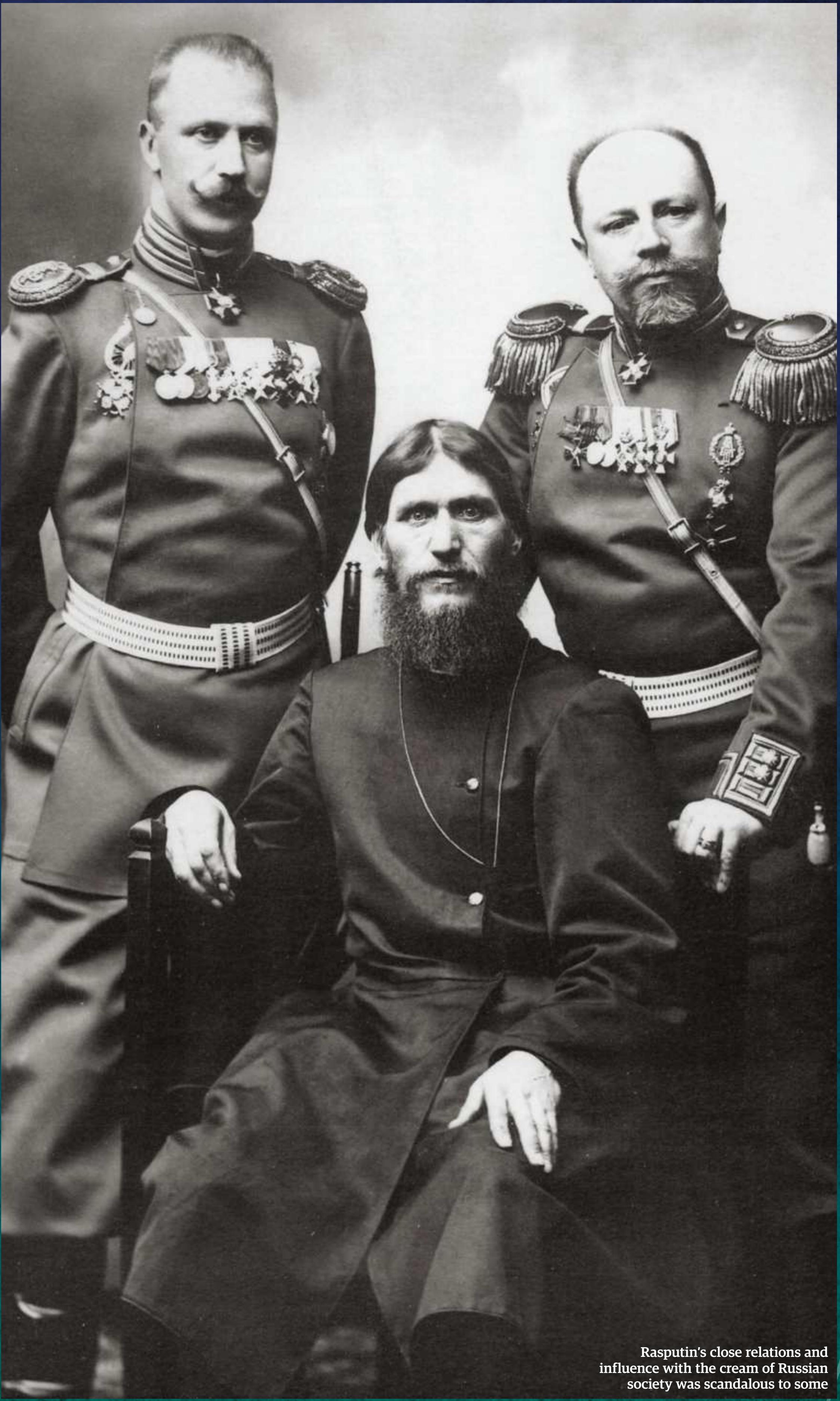
Born in Bessarabia, a region in Eastern Europe, Purishkevich followed his strong right-wing leanings and founded the Union of Russian People, a counter-revolutionary group. He was then elected to the Russian Duma, but he was a disruptive presence. Behind the scenes he was working on a plan to rid the country of Rasputin's influence for good.

Stanislaus de Lazovert

Originally born in Poland, Lazovert moved to Russia and crossed paths with Purishkevich during WWI. Trained as a doctor, it was Lazovert who was given the task of lacing the cakes with poison - potassium cyanide to be exact. He claimed to have used a dose large enough to kill several men, but Rasputin somehow survived. It has since been argued that Lazovert's will failed him and he in fact couldn't poison the cakes.

Sergei Mikhailovich Sukhotin

A lieutenant in the Preobrazhensky Regiment, one of the oldest elite regiments of the Imperial Russian Army, it is believed that Sukhotin was an old friend of Felix's. He was injured near the beginning of the war. Little is known about Sukhotin beyond this, but it is likely he had some familiarity with the men to become embroiled in the plot.



Rasputin's close relations and influence with the cream of Russian society was scandalous to some

Lover of the Russian queen?

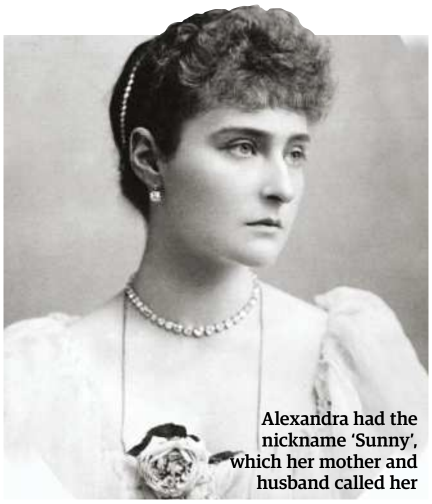
Was Rasputin's relationship with Alexandra purely platonic, or were his charms too great to resist?

Alexandra had never really been a popular woman; the granddaughter of Queen Victoria, she was an immensely traditional person, and it was these beliefs that led the imperial family to leave St Petersburg. This disconnect from her own people was fated to be a constant aspect of her life, as she lived in seclusion with her husband and children. As family became her whole life, she leapt at the chance, any chance, to save her only son. The moment Rasputin's apparent powers bore fruit, she made him a key member of the royal entourage.

When Nicholas made the disastrous decision to assume supreme command of the Russian army, the country was essentially run by Alexandra and in turn Rasputin, as her most trusted advisor. She proceeded to dismiss ministers and their deputies, making enemies left, right and centre. This hatred soon gave rise to rumours; people began to believe the two hated figures were secretly part of a pro-German group. Rasputin was painted as a dark, manipulative demon, and Alexandra as a hysterical, easily persuaded woman.

The public began to believe that the Germans, through Rasputin, had the Imperial family in their clutches. The 'Mad Monk' already had a reputation as a womaniser, and now it was thought he had seduced the most important woman in Russia. Alexandra ignored the rumours that Rasputin had openly said the Tsar would let him have sex with his wife whenever he wanted. The Tsarina was accustomed to writing flowery letters to all her close companions, but when her letters to Rasputin fell into the wrong hands, they were catastrophically misinterpreted.

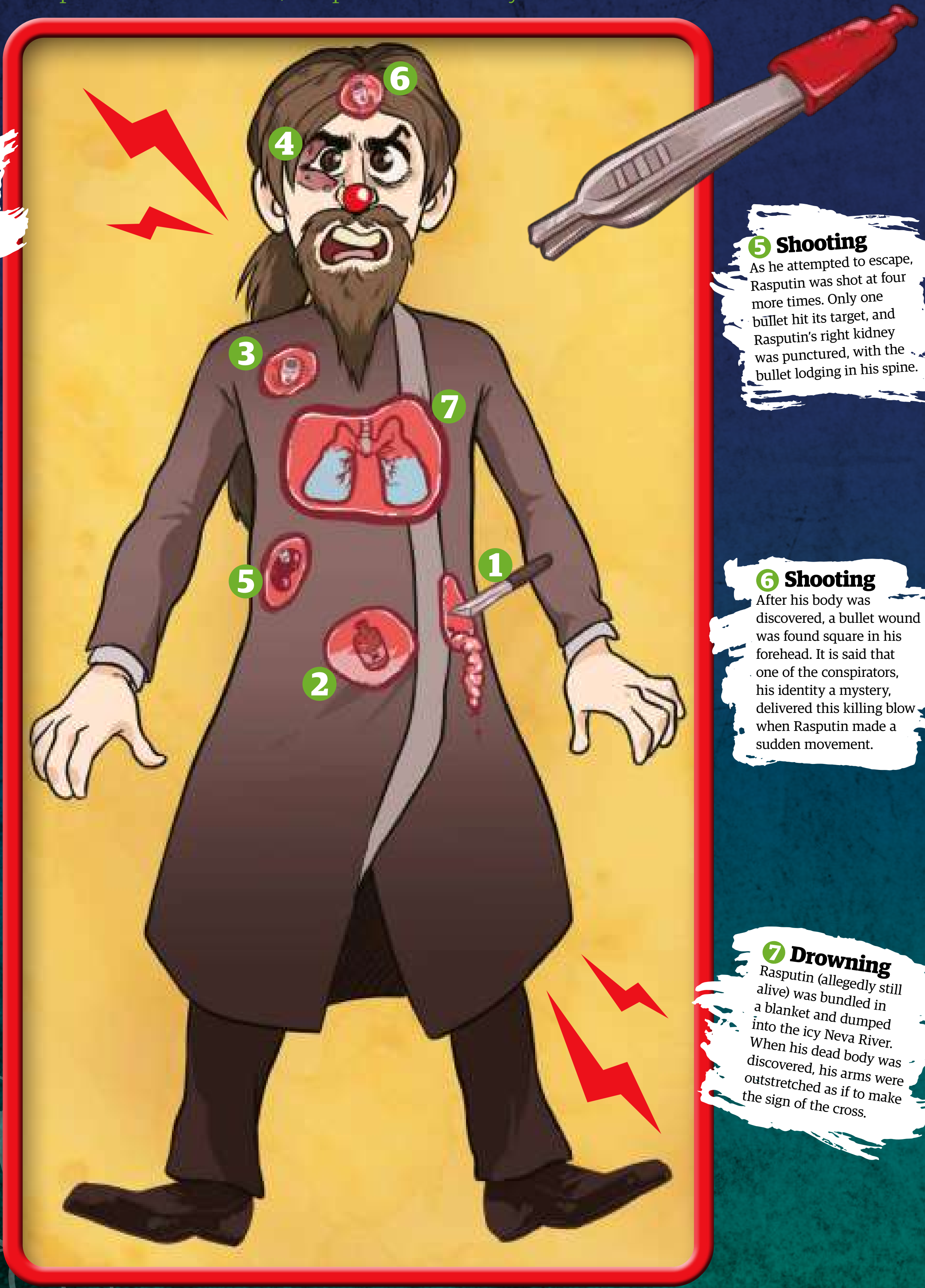
Pornographic caricatures of the two were produced and Rasputin became the most hated man in Russia. On the Tsarina's part, she had many faults, but having affairs was probably not one of them. It is more likely that she was drawn to Rasputin as she believed he the only man capable of saving her beloved son, and she was willing to put up with all the rumours and slander in the world for that.



Alexandra had the nickname 'Sunny', which her mother and husband called her

The many lives of Rasputin

As his conspirators discovered, Rasputin was a very difficult man to kill



① Stabbing

A former prostitute stabbed Rasputin in the gut so violently that his entrails fell from his stomach. She also screamed, "I've killed the Antichrist!" However, he survived after surgery.

② Poison

Fuelled by the country's hate, a group of conspirators lured Rasputin to their home and encouraged him to dine on wine and cyanide-laced cakes. Despite consuming enough poison to kill several men, he was nevertheless unaffected.

③ Shooting

After Rasputin failed to be affected by the poison, one of the conspirators rushed upstairs and returned with a revolver. Rasputin was shot through the chest. The bullet went clean through his body, but he still wasn't dead.

④ Beating

After falling to the floor having been shot, Rasputin tried to escape through the yard. The conspirators chased after him and beat him with a rubber club when they caught up.

⑤ Shooting

As he attempted to escape, Rasputin was shot at four more times. Only one bullet hit its target, and Rasputin's right kidney was punctured, with the bullet lodging in his spine.

⑥ Shooting

After his body was discovered, a bullet wound was found square in his forehead. It is said that one of the conspirators, his identity a mystery, delivered this killing blow when Rasputin made a sudden movement.

⑦ Drowning

Rasputin (allegedly still alive) was bundled in a blanket and dumped into the icy Neva River. When his dead body was discovered, his arms were outstretched as if to make the sign of the cross.

Rasputin became very close to the Romanovs, especially the Tsarina and the Tsarevich

Rasputin remained deeply religious throughout his life

The 'Mad Monk'

believe all the tittle-tattle about him." One of the most damning accusations was that he was a member of the Khlysty, an underground sect. The fact that he was a good dancer, and that the sect was known for their dances and possible sexual promiscuity, seemed to add fuel to the accusation. Many different figures in the Orthodox Church leapt on this, accusing Rasputin of numerous immoral practises.

Against such a torrent of abuse, Nicholas had no choice but to investigate the holy man. However, after two months with nothing uncovered, the investigation ended. Anyone who criticised Rasputin was condemned by a royal family pushed to the brink. Politicians who spoke out against him often found themselves relieved of their positions, and more willing, obedient men were put in their place. Rasputin's influence now went beyond the royal family and into politics as well. Even Bishop Theophan, a one-time friend to the embattled mystic, attempted to persuade the Tsar to put some distance between himself and Rasputin, but was dismissed. Whether the allegations against Rasputin were true or not, many people now had a legitimate reason to loathe him.

If Nicholas wasn't willing to condemn Rasputin with the rest of them, then the two of them would burn together. By associating and supporting a man who was regarded by many as a licentious, perverted and even evil force, Nicholas did little to bolster his own reputation. This reached an extreme when the Tsar took supreme command of the Russian armies during WWI. As this meant frequent trips away from the capital, his wife was put in charge of domestic policy alongside the only advisor she now trusted - Rasputin. The backlash was immediate; all the ministers threatened to resign, the nobles loudly voiced their disgust at Nicholas' decision and pleaded with him to think again - but Rasputin's own headstrong determination had rubbed off on the impressionable Tsar and he stood his ground.

> "She was not a weak woman, but she was ultimately at the whim of a man able to command immense power"

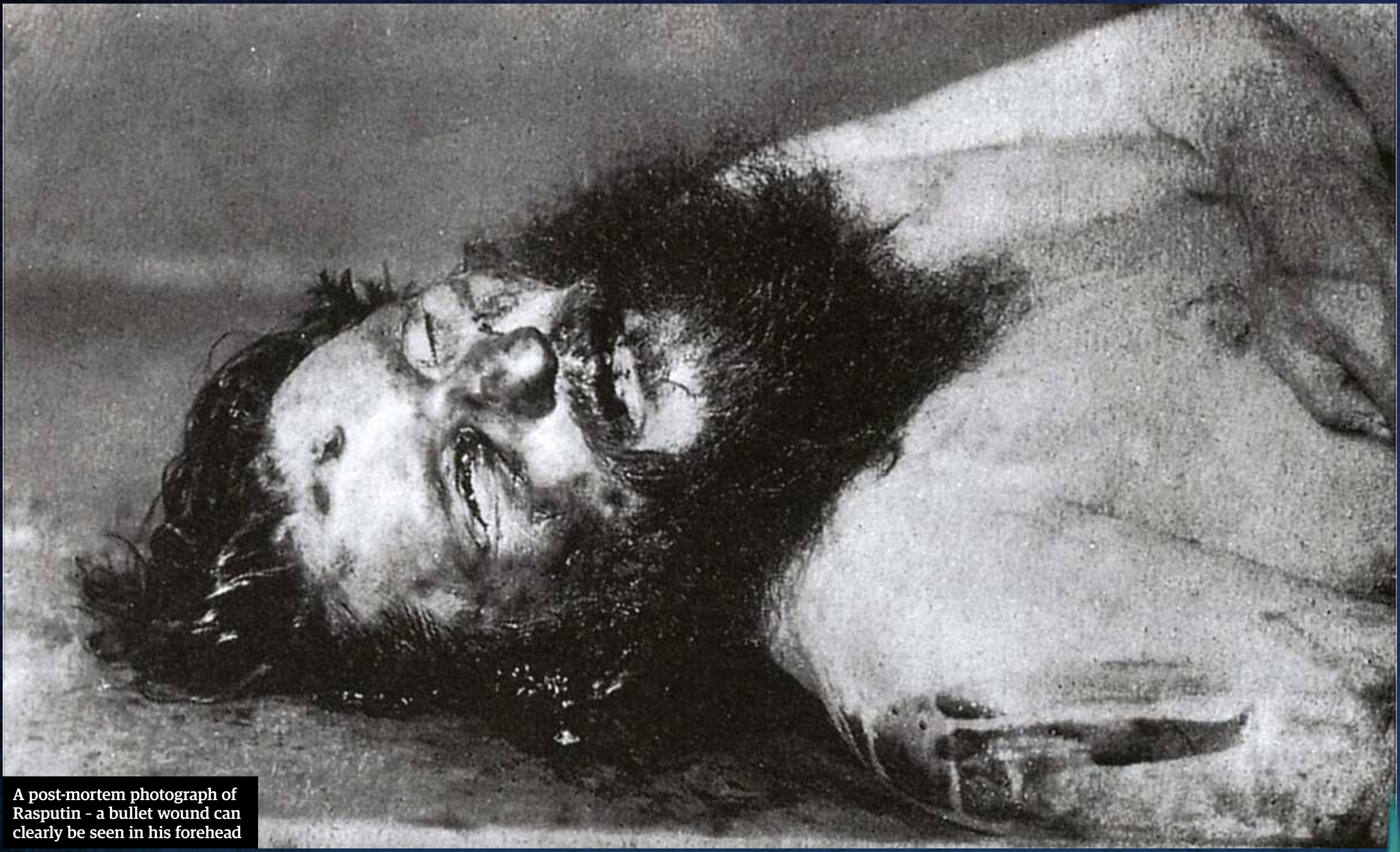
Daughter of the 'mad monk'

Forced to flee from Russia, Maria Rasputin led a life almost as eventful as her father's

When Rasputin abandoned his life of crime to become a holy man, petty theft was not the only thing he left behind. He also said goodbye to his wife and three children: Dmitri, Maria and Varvara. It must have been peculiar for the children when their father returned as he had undergone a startling transformation, from vagabond to holy man. Maria recorded all her memories of her father in her diaries as she grew up, even complaining about his strict rules and long hours of prayer, "for which everything, anniversaries or penitences, served as an excuse." Maria eventually followed her father to the hallowed halls of St Petersburg in order to be trained to become a proper lady. She quickly became friends with the Imperial family, but as we know, this was ill-fated. Maria's world was torn apart as her father was assassinated and later, her new friends, the Romanovs. It is rumoured that it was Maria who was forced to identify her father's body.

As Russia was torn apart, Maria escaped and lived a fugitive's existence, constantly fleeing the entrapments of the Red Army. Maria travelled across all of Europe, married a man of 'dubious character', had two daughters, and lost her husband all in less than a decade. As Maria's family members disappeared, she performed across the continent as a cabaret dancer, while penning a staunch defence of her father entitled *The Real Rasputin*. The book and its successor, *My Father*, painted a very different portrait of her loathed and despised father. The Rasputin in Maria's text was closer to a pious saint, and she claimed her enemies were responsible for the common perception of him. Maria continued to travel across Europe, but this time as a lion tamer in a travelling circus. Eventually Maria's non-stop lifestyle was forced to an end when she was mauled by a bear. Despite surviving the attack, her circus career was over, and she moved to Los Angeles and finally settled into a quiet life.

Maria (third from left) claimed to be psychic, and said that Betty Ford came to her in a dream



A post-mortem photograph of Rasputin - a bullet wound can clearly be seen in his forehead

The Bloody End of a Dynasty

When Nicholas II abdicated his throne, it marked the end of a history of tsardom that stretched back to Ivan IV 'The Terrible'

Nicholas II had never been a natural sovereign, nor had his father prepared him to rule, believing that, as he was in his forties, he had a great many years yet. He was wrong: Nicholas, young, naive and ill-prepared became Tsar aged just 26. This was the beginning of a reign that was clouded by bad judgements, mistakes and a blindness to the plight and opinions of his subjects. After the revolution of 1905 Nicholas had promised to listen to his people's demands for basic civil liberties, but because of his strong belief in the divine right of tsars, these promises were soon revoked.

After leading his country into disastrous and costly wars, conditions in Russia worsened. Food was scarce, soldiers died in their tens of thousands and defeat after defeat destroyed any confidence the people had in their leader. Prices soared and riots tore through the country, leaving the nation completely disillusioned by a regime that didn't seem to care about their welfare at all. Revolution was inevitable.

Nicholas ordered that the demonstrators be dealt with, and some 200 citizens were shot dead in the street. Eventually even the army garrison at Petrograd, the oldest and most loyal regiment, joined the fight and Nicholas had no choice but to abdicate his throne, aged 48.

Nicholas and his family were quickly exiled and imprisoned, forced to live on soldiers' rations, as they remained unaware of their ultimate fate. It was believed the tsar may eventually be put on trial, but the events of 17 July 1918 changed everything. Though there are many conflicting accounts, it is believed the family was awoken in the early hours and were led down to a basement room under the guise of safety.

However, as they assembled in the room, a firing squad of seven communist soldiers filed in. With time only to splutter, "What? What?" Nicholas was shot dead. Only the young children survived the first hail of bullets, their jewel-laden dresses shielding them, but they were soon run through with bayonets and shot in the head at close range. The elimination was not only of the family, but also of the line of tsars in Russia. The people believed they were better off ruling themselves rather than relying on the aristocracy. However, they ultimately discovered that normal men could be just as terrible as tsars.

After their murders the Romanovs were canonised as martyrs by the Russian Orthodox Church, though outside of Russia

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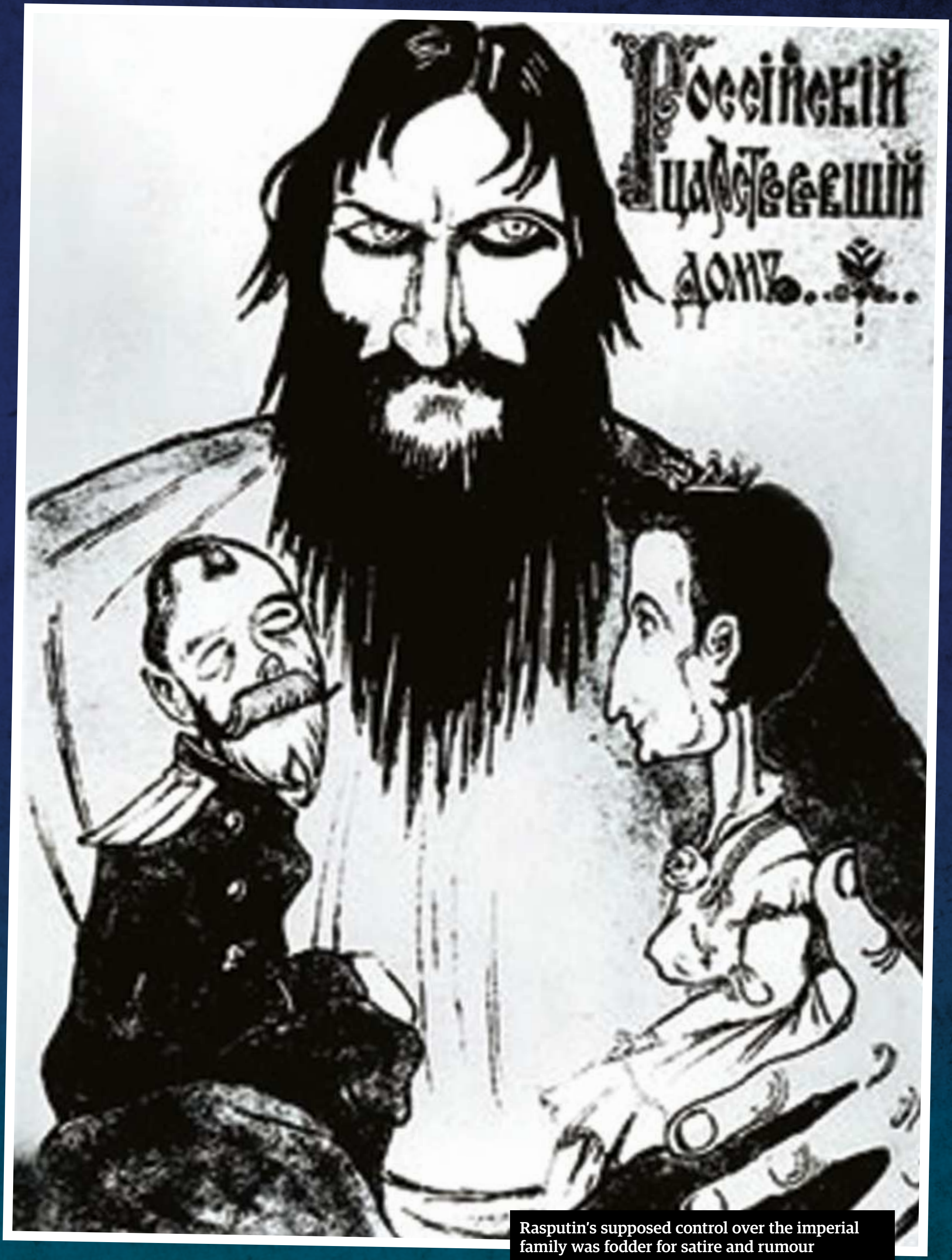


Rasputin's supposed control over the imperial family was fodder for satire and rumour

Rasputin's corpse lies on a board with his arms raised as if making the sign of the cross

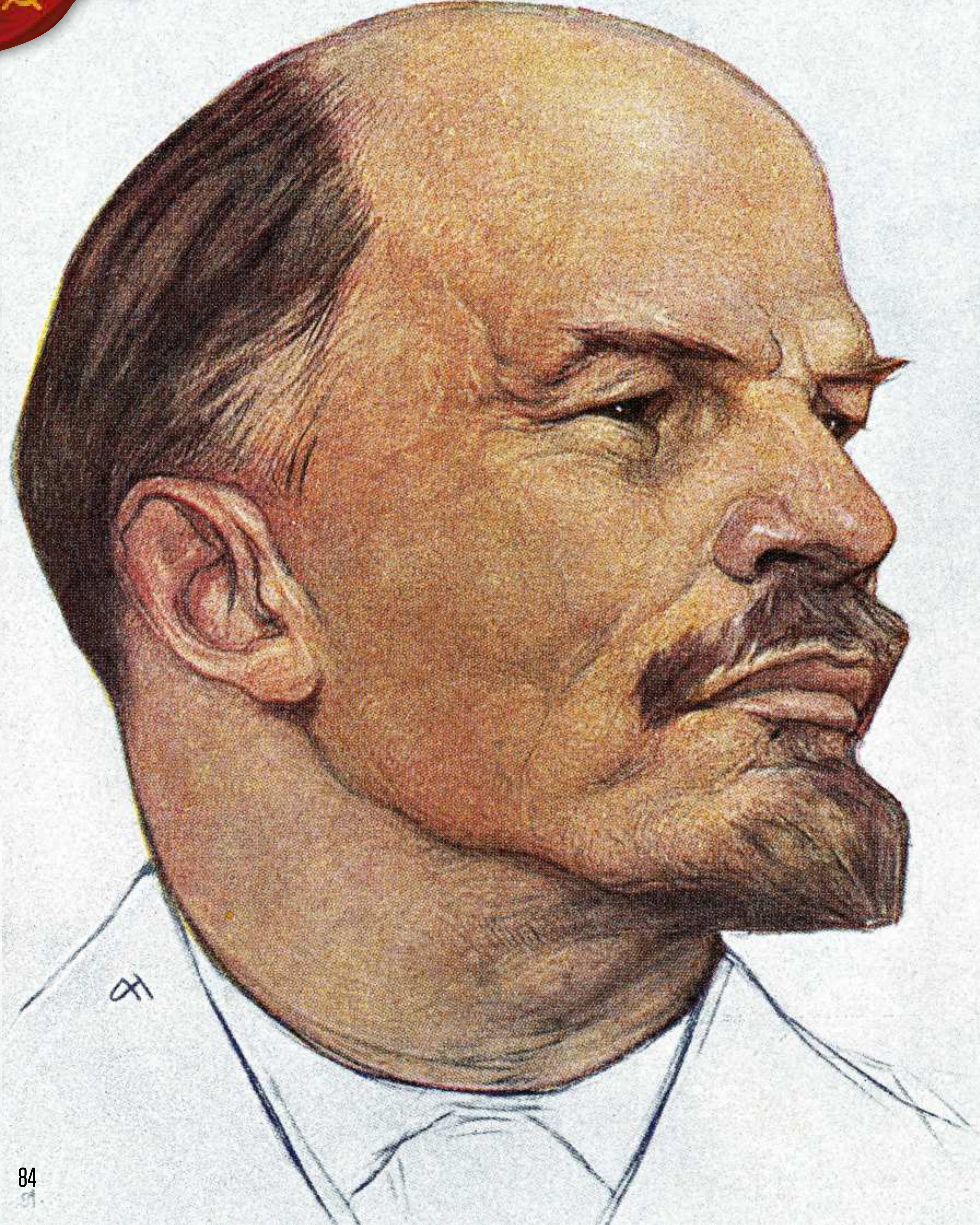
Just as they had feared, Rasputin became Alexandra's close personal confidant. She was not a weak woman, but she was ultimately entirely at the whim of a man able to command immense power by speaking softly while dressed in rags. Rasputin ordered that the Tsarina persuade a far weaker man to obey - her husband. In this way Rasputin held the fate of Russia, and all of its people, in his hands. For those who viewed him as a weird, immoral and dangerous peasant, this was simply unacceptable.

It is difficult to know exactly what Rasputin, at this time, believed. His entire demeanour was said to have changed immensely after an assassination attempt in 1914, and it is quite possible that the near-death experience made him a little warier of trusting people. Although he was said to be strict and somewhat harsh with his words, there is no evidence to prove that Rasputin was ever violent or cruel. His character was, and always had been, independent, headstrong and in possession of incredible self-belief.

Whether he thought he was doing the right thing or not, Rasputin had made some very dangerous enemies. With the Tsarina refusing to acknowledge that he was a bad influence, the nobles decided to take matters into their own hands and eliminate the threat to Russia themselves. A group of conspirators, including the Tsar's first cousin and a member of parliament, tricked Rasputin into meeting with them under the pretence of meeting the Tsar's niece. Rasputin entered the Yusupov Palace on the night of 17/30 December 1916 and was not seen alive again. His disappearance was noted immediately the next morning, and a search began. His body was discovered, frozen solid, beside the riverbank of the Malaya Nevka River. The man with the hypnotising eyes was dead.

When the conspirators planned Rasputin's murder, their goal was likely to eliminate his powerful influence over the royal family. But the monarchy could not be saved, not even by destroying Rasputin. Russia was already hurtling off the cliff by the time he was murdered, and it was far too late to save it. In December 1916, Rasputin had written a letter to the Tsar about a peculiar prophecy, that if he was killed by the Tsar's relations then "none of your children will remain alive for more than two years." He predicted the Tsar's death, and the coming of the Antichrist, to plummet the country into plague and poverty. He also claimed that "the Russian land will die."

There were many who doubted Rasputin, who called him a charlatan who coerced people with pretty words and a hypnotic gaze. They may have been correct, and we have no way of knowing Rasputin's true power. However, the 'Mad Monk' was right about one thing - the Romanovs were overthrown ten weeks after his death and, just as he predicted, within two years the entire family was dead. It had been very easy to place blame at the feet of the peculiar travelling mystic, rather than the weak leader, but now both were dead, and Russia faced an uncertain, tumultuous and - if Rasputin was right - dark future.



Father of the Revolution

The leader of the Bolshevik Revolution and the Soviet Union, Lenin was relentless in purpose and ruthless in establishing and maintaining power

His upbringing seems unlikely for a political revolutionary, one whose drive and determination brought his own brand of Marxism to power in Russia and forged the monolithic Union of Soviet Socialist Republics into a global communist power.

Known universally by his famous alias 'Lenin', Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov was born in the Russian town of Simbirsk on 10 April (OS) / 22 April (NS) 1870 to a prosperous family. His father, Ilya Nikolayevich Ulyanov, rose to middle-class status as an education administrator, and the Order of Saint Vladimir conferred upon him the status of minor nobility. His mother, Maria Alexandrovna Blank, was a teacher.

The third of eight children, two of whom died in infancy, Lenin was an excellent student. Although his parents instilled a love of learning in him and seemed to encourage free thought, there is no indication that they embraced any radical political agenda. Still, tsarist Russia was no stranger to political unrest. By the time Lenin had completed secondary school, his life had begun to assume a revolutionary character, shaped by personal tragedy.

In January 1886, Lenin's father suffered a stroke and died. His older brother, Alexander, known as Sasha, attended Saint Petersburg University and had joined a student group opposed to the policies of Tsar Alexander III. Sasha became embroiled in a plot to assassinate the ruler, resulting in his arrest and hanging in May. Lenin began to question the foundations of his upbringing, including his Christian faith, which he renounced.

LENIN'S WORKING-CLASS CREDENTIALS WEREN'T QUITE WHAT HE CLAIMED. HIS FATHER HAD IN FACT BEEN ENNOBLED IN 1882

Entering Kazan Imperial University in August 1887, Lenin studied law, but within weeks he was implicated in a student demonstration and expelled after being arrested. Banished to his family estate, he embarked on an insatiable campaign of reading, particularly politically charged works. Among the books he consumed were components of the iconic *Das Kapital*, which outlined the theories of its author, Karl Marx, and the novel *What is to be Done?*, written by socialist Nikolai Chernyshevsky in 1863. The latter featured a character named Rakhmetev, whose commitment to revolutionary thought and action contributed to Lenin's political evolution and served as a template for his future prominence. Concerned for her son's welfare, Lenin's mother moved the family to a country estate in Samara. However, by the time Lenin graduated from university with a law degree, he was becoming a fervent Marxist revolutionary. And while earlier encounters with authorities complicated his efforts to establish a viable law practice, he translated the landmark political treatise *The Communist Manifesto*, penned by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, into Russian from the original German and continued to devour leftist political writings.

By 1893, Lenin had abandoned his law practice and relocated to Saint Petersburg. Connecting with other Marxists, he became active in the anti-tsarist movement, writing political pamphlets espousing his perspective, and at times he lived outside Russia among Marxist expatriates in Switzerland, Paris and Berlin.

Upon his return to Russia, he was among 40 activists who were arrested and charged with sedition. After a year in jail, he was sentenced, without trial, to exile in Siberia for three years. His fiancée, Nadezhda Krupskaya, a Marxist

Waving his cap in an inspirational gesture, Lenin, an accomplished orator, stirs up a crowd during one of his fiery anti-government speeches in a city square

A figure transcendent

Lenin's resting place became a monument no one has forgotten

In the wake of his death, Lenin remained a central figure in the continuing Revolution. The Russian people revered him and by extension, those adherents to his Marxist-Leninist philosophy around the world sought to emulate his achievements.

Within a week of his death in January 1924, Lenin's body was embalmed and placed in a temporary wooden tomb near the Kremlin Wall in Moscow's Red Square with a guard of honour surrounding his sarcophagus. Within just a few days, more than 100,000 visitors had come to view the remains of the first leader of the Soviet Union. That summer, a larger tomb was erected while arrangements were discussed to maintain the body on permanent display. By 1929, embalmers and pathologists concluded that it might be able to be preserved in a presentable state for an indefinite period.

Plans for a permanent mausoleum were drawn by acclaimed architect Alekey Shchusev and its construction was completed in 1930. Lenin's mausoleum incorporates classical architectural elements. Constructed of marble, granite, labradorite and porphyry, its distinctive design and deep red colour have become recognisable the world over.

The preservation of Lenin's body is a continuing process, and both private and government funding maintain it today. Lenin's remains have been continually on display for nearly a century, with the exception of their removal to Siberia as German forces approached Moscow during the dark days of World War II. After the war, it was returned to its former location and the tomb was reopened to visitors. From 1953 to 1961, the body of Josef Stalin also resided in the mausoleum – however, this was then removed and finally buried in the Kremlin Wall.

The mausoleum where Lenin's body rests is visited by thousands each year and sits in Red Square just outside the Kremlin Wall in Moscow

> "Returning to Western Europe, he helped *Iskra* to begin printing and copies were smuggled across the Russian border"

schoolteacher, joined him there, and the two were married in 1898.

Upon his release from exile, Lenin, who first began using his well-known alias around 1901, lived in the town of Pskov, near the Estonian border. He cofounded the underground newspaper *Iskra*, which became the primary media organ of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP). Returning to Western Europe, he helped *Iskra* to begin printing in Munich and copies were smuggled across the Russian border. Stalked by German police, he moved to London, where he continued to publish the newspaper and met long-term Marxist associate Leon Trotsky.

At the Second Congress of the RSDLP in London in 1903, Lenin stepped forward, advocating a highly controlled, organised party of limited numbers that would project a unified voice and direct the efforts of lower workers in achieving long-term goals. "Give us an organisation of revolutionaries, and we will overturn Russia!" he bellowed.

Other events played into the Bolsheviks' hands, eroding the authority of the tsarist regime and raising the discontent of the people to a crescendo. In 1904-05, the Russian military was humiliated by their decisive defeat in the Russo-Japanese War. A tremendous blow, the conflict also weakened an already shaky economy.

On 9/22 January 1905, a crowd of unarmed demonstrators marched to the Winter Palace in Saint Petersburg, demanding reforms. Russian soldiers fired into the crowd, killing and wounding dozens. The violence and upheaval of the so-called 1905 Revolution compelled Tsar Nicholas II to issue his October Manifesto, granting numerous rights to the people, foremost among them the establishment of the Duma, a representative assembly.

Lenin continued to battle rivals within his own party. While one faction – the Mensheviks, led by Julius Martov – favoured a revolution of the bourgeoisie, those who had established a Russian middle class through control of the means of production, Lenin and the Bolsheviks believed the revolution must be grounded in the proletariat, the working class. At the end of 1907, Lenin embarked on a second journey across Western Europe, living in Geneva and Paris. By 1912, he had asserted enough power to declare a formal split with the Mensheviks and he established an independent party advocating violent revolution.

At the outbreak of World War I, Lenin was in Austria-Hungary. He returned to Switzerland and wrote *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, which was published in 1917 and boldly stated that the war was the result of unrestrained capitalism. He also believed that Russia's defeat at the hands of Germany and the Central Powers provided the most certain means of achieving revolution.

In February 1917, the Russian people overthrew their emperor and established a provisional

Defining moment

Execution amid revolution

8/20 May 1887

Lenin's older brother, Alexander, or Sasha, was hanged. A student at Saint Petersburg University, Sasha joined a revolutionary group and was tasked with making a bomb to assassinate Tsar Alexander III but the plot was foiled, so Sasha was imprisoned and eventually executed. The death of his brother, and that of his father due to a stroke a few months earlier, roused a revolutionary fervour in the young Lenin, who renounced his Christian faith and became head of the family at the age of 17. Lenin immersed himself in the reading of books and pamphlets that espoused Marxist philosophy.

Timeline

1870

Born into minor nobility

The third of eight children, Lenin was born Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov in the Russian town of Simbirsk to parents who were both educators. For meritorious service, a title of minor nobility was conferred upon his father.

10/22 April 1870

1887

A would-be attorney

Lenin became a student of law at Kazan University. However, within three months he was expelled for participation in a student demonstration. He returned to the family estate and continued to read up on Marxist theory.

August 1887

1895

Arrest and exile

Engaging in revolutionary activities, Lenin devoted less time to law practice. Arrested with other leaders of the Union for the Struggle for the Liberation of the Working Class and Exiled, he married Nadezhda Krupskaya in Siberia.

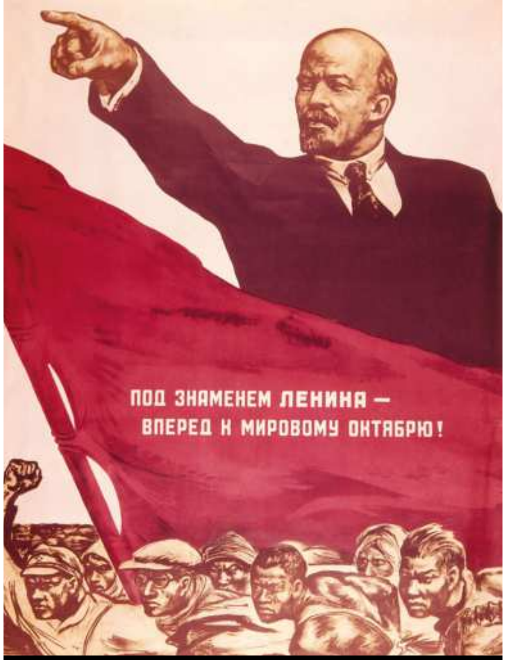
December 1895

1900

The spark

Lenin and other Bolsheviks cofound the underground newspaper *Iskra*, which was printed outside Russia and smuggled into the country. Along with other prominent party members, Lenin maintained a position on the newspaper's editorial board.

1/13 December 1900


ПОД ЗНАМЕНЕМ ЛЕНИНА —
ВПЕРЕД К МИРОВОМУ ОКТЯБРЮ!

This spirited Soviet propaganda poster incorporates the Red banner and proclaims that Lenin points the way forward for the armed masses

government dominated by the bourgeoisie. Lenin, however, sensed that his own hour of revolution was near. With the assistance of the German government, he returned to Russia, completing some of the journey across Germany in a sealed railway carriage.

In early November 1917, the Bolsheviks seized power in a swift coup d'état. The war had gone badly for Russia, and Lenin's new government ended its involvement in the conflict with the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918. Subsequently, the Russian Communist Party and government, dominated by Lenin, faced three years of civil war against former tsarist leaders who were supported by foreign governments, which supplied arms, financing and even troops to the so-called 'Whites', who fought against the communist 'Reds' for the soul of Russia. Lenin survived two assassination attempts during this period, the second nearly succeeding. His rapid recovery amazed the people, and the communists miraculously prevailed in the civil war as well.

Lenin proved himself to be a ruthless leader, unleashing the infamous Red Terror – a systematic campaign to eliminate enemies of the state and any perceived opposition to the emerging soviet-style government. Nevertheless, he was concerned that his vision for society had not developed as it should. A nation free of class struggle would not emerge while it reeled from economic calamity. Lenin also grew increasingly distrustful of the power of the party's secretary, Joseph Stalin, who eventually became his successor.

In May 1922, Lenin suffered a stroke. He returned to work three months later, but a second stroke in December revealed his rapidly deteriorating health. His last years were devoted to the governmental structure of the Soviet Union after his death and in January 1923, he concluded his Testament, a series of papers noting concerns that the nation and party would destabilise under Stalin's leadership. Two months later, another stroke rendered him unable to speak. He died on 21 January 1924.

Lenin was brilliant, driven and sometimes cruel. His standing among the people and party remained a focal point of Soviet society, as his body was embalmed in a spectacular tomb in Moscow's Red Square, where it is still on display today.

From the platform of his railway carriage, Lenin waves to a gathering crowd at the train station in Petrograd in 1917

Return to Russia

With the news of the abdication of Nicholas II, Lenin was galvanised into action. The Duma controlled the Russian provisional government in Saint Petersburg (known as Petrograd from 1914) and civil unrest persisted.

Lenin was determined to return to Russia but the main routes from Switzerland were blocked by the raging world war. Reaching out to contacts in the German government, Russia's enemy, Lenin arranged for himself and 31 close associates to return to Russia. The Germans recognised that Lenin's presence in Petrograd would further destabilise it and allowed him to cross Germany.

Lenin's party left Zürich, Switzerland, and headed north across Germany to Sassnitz, where they crossed the Baltic Sea to Sweden aboard a ferry. From Trelleborg, the Russians proceeded to the Finnish border at Tornio, and then on to Helsinki. From there, they reached Petrograd by train in April 1917. Lenin promised the Russian people "Peace, Land and Bread!" but the provisional government had branded him a traitor.

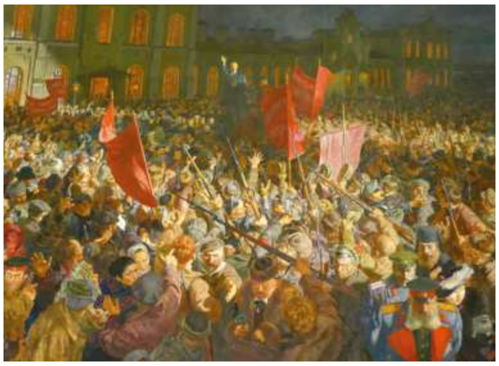
Lenin made public speeches denouncing the Mensheviks for cooperating with the Duma but was hounded by police and forced to flee to Finland in July. In his absence, the Bolsheviks gained momentum. When he returned in the autumn, Russia was on the brink of monumental change.

Defining moment

The storm of revolution

26 October/8 November 1917

Following the downfall of Tsar Nicholas II in February 1917, the Russian provisional government, led by the liberal, pro-bourgeoisie Duma, came under fire from Lenin, who had returned to the country from Switzerland to lead a concerted effort to seize power. Violence erupted and the Bolsheviks executed a coup d'état, toppling the provisional government as they seized key buildings in Petrograd. Elements of the military lent support to the popular uprising. Although he initially declined, Lenin became the foremost leader in the new government. Unrest continued and the Bolshevik regime was subsequently faced with three years of civil war.



Defining moment

Strokes strike

26 May 1922

Lenin suffered the first in a series of debilitating strokes that eventually robbed him of his ability to speak. The first brain haemorrhage prevented him from returning to work until August. Then, four months later in December 1922, he was felled by another stroke, followed by a third life-threatening event in March 1923. After the end of the bloody civil war, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics came into being. However, Lenin was disenchanted with the development of the soviet government, leaning towards an authoritarian regime rather than a true socialist dictatorship of the proletariat.

1905

Return to Russia
Following an extended period of exile and travels in Western Europe, Lenin returned to Russia amid the civil unrest of the 1905 Revolution, which ultimately proved to be unsuccessful in toppling Tsar Nicholas II.
November 1905

1912

The Marxist schism
A lengthy divergence in philosophies occurred within the Marxist party during a congress in Prague. The Bolsheviks espoused a revolution of the proletariat, while the Mensheviks advocated the bourgeoisie. Lenin led the Bolsheviks.
17/30 January 1912

1918

Brush with death
As the Russian Civil War erupted, Lenin survived the second of two assassination attempts in an eight-month period. Wounded by two bullets, he managed to rapidly recover.
August 1918

1923

Lasting testament
Amid growing health concerns, Lenin completed his Testament, a series of articles discussing the future of the burgeoning Soviet Union, while warning of the emerging power of Party Secretary Josef Stalin, who was assuming dictatorial authority.
4 January 1923

1924

Death of the leader
Within a year of his last stroke, Lenin died at his home in Gorki at the age of 53. His body was embalmed and placed on display, and a grand mausoleum was eventually erected.
21 January 1924

© Alamy/Getty Images

Lenin and Trotsky (central and standing) photographed in 1921

The Revolution's right-hand man

Considered Lenin's intellectual superior by some, Leon Trotsky was pivotal to the revolution's success. Nevertheless, his fate was to be exile and murder

The pen in Lev Davidovich Bronstein's hand hovered above the paper. He needed to write a name on the travel permit, but as he was attempting to escape exile for revolutionary activities, entering his own name would have been ridiculous. Randomly, he thought about a jailer who had guarded him in an Odessa prison, prior to his exile. The pen lowered and he entered the jailer's name. He had no inkling that it would stick, that he would be known as that for the rest of his life. The first name he put down was Leon, a variation of Lev. For the surname, he wrote Trotsky.

Some 22 years earlier, in November 1879, the Russian-Jewish Bronstein family's fifth child had entered the world in southern Ukraine. Aged eight, he was dispatched to relatives in Odessa to attend school. The bustling city was a stark contrast to his rural home and he thrived educationally and culturally. To complete his schooling and prepare for university, he moved to Nikolayev. There, he was introduced to Marxism.

A growing political awareness was fuelled when he met Franz Shvigovsky, a Czech intellectual who held informal gatherings at his home where radical ideas were discussed and exchanged. Bronstein began to devour serious and wide-ranging political literature. One of the group, a young woman named Alexandra Sokolovskaya, championed the emerging theories of Karl Marx and Bronstein later began to view Marxism as a viable means for change.

Dismaying his father, Bronstein abandoned thoughts of university and enthusiastically began to undermine the tsarist regime. Working with Sokolovskaya and others, he formed the South Russian Workers' Union, which agitated for better wages and conditions in local industries, when he was just a teenager. He wrote tracts and pamphlets to recruit members but the group was naïve about informers. The founders were arrested for revolutionary activity in January 1898.

Following months of isolation in different prisons, Bronstein was transferred to a jail in Odessa, where he could at least read and broaden his knowledge of Marxism. Almost two years later, he was sentenced without trial to four years' exile in Siberia along with Sokolovskaya. A spell in a transit prison in Moscow followed, where he first heard about Lenin, and he married Sokolovskaya.

> "While they argued, a revolution started without them in 1905 as Russian workers demonstrating at Saint Petersburg's Winter Palace were shot dead"

In Siberia, they were billeted in a village called Ust-Kot. It was a desolate place, feverishly hot in summer and many degrees below zero in winter. As such, and given its vast distance from the main Russian population centres, the tsarist regime committed few resources to suppressing revolutionary discussion. All manner of exiled dissidents travelled along the river to meet, debate, and distribute smuggled pamphlets and literature. Eventually, Lenin's publication, *What is to be Done?*, and issues of *Iskra*, a Marxist newspaper, reached the village.

Bronstein himself had begun writing for an Irkutsk newspaper, *Vostochnoe Obozrenie* ('Eastern Review'). He was quickly recognised as a talented contributor of well-crafted prose, ironic and sarcastic by turns, subtly including political commentary. He had formed the view that a centralised party was needed to coordinate revolutionary activity and when he read that Lenin was advocating something similar, he resolved to join him.

As someone who found sentimentality abhorrent, and claiming in any case that his wife encouraged him to leave, Trotsky, as he had now become, had no hesitation in abandoning her and their two young daughters to scurry west. He reached London and began to write for *Iskra*.

Trotsky was developing into an intellectual powerhouse and was never afraid to show it, even disagreeing with Lenin. He supported the Menshevik view of a democratic road to socialism against Lenin's standpoint that a controlling elite of dedicated revolutionaries should retain authority.

While they argued, a revolution started without them in 1905 as Russian workers demonstrating at Saint Petersburg's Winter Palace were shot dead. A general strike ensued and the crew of the battleship Potemkin mutinied. Trotsky, by then married to his second wife, Natalia Sedova, hurried home. Impressing with his energy and intellect, he quickly rose to prominence in the Saint Petersburg Soviet, or workers' council, demanding radical reforms. Concessions like the creation of the Duma, weakened the opposition's resolve and the revolt was suppressed. Trotsky was arrested, tried and given a second Siberian exile.

There he wrote *Results and Prospects*, outlining his theory of permanent revolution, before once again escaping west. For income, Trotsky returned to journalism, expertly covering the Yugoslav Wars of 1912-13 as a war correspondent. Like Lenin, he opposed World War I, but this led to his expulsion from several European countries. As 1917 dawned, he was in New York.

Within months, Tsar Nicholas II had abdicated and Trotsky viewed the turmoil as the beginning of his predicted permanent revolution. He was back in Saint Petersburg, now called Petrograd, by mid-May and his differences with Lenin were narrowing. The Bolsheviks had first supported the Provisional Government that took power after the abdication. In his *April Theses*, Lenin argued that his party should end that support and break with the Mensheviks to stop Russia's participation in the war and reorganise the country along socialist principles. Previously a Menshevik, Trotsky drifted from the faction because of its war position. He joined Lenin in July.

They were a formidable alliance: Lenin in the background, guiding, planning and organising; Trotsky visible and energetic, rallying and rousing support from workers, soldiers and sailors with fiery oratory. Once Lenin resurfaced and prompted the Bolsheviks to seize power, Trotsky swiftly became commissar for foreign affairs.

As such, seeking the promised end of war, an armistice with Germany was arranged to allow peace talks. To encourage the expected revolutions elsewhere in Europe, Trotsky released details of secret treaties agreed by the tsarist regime with Britain and France, revealing how a defeated Germany would be divided between them. Yet no further uprisings occurred and though he used stalling tactics during the negotiations, Germany lost patience and threatened Petrograd. This led to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which brought peace but surrendered key lands to the aggressors.

Few believed Germany would adhere to the treaty, while Lenin's Russia faced civil war from counter-revolutionary forces. A Red Army was needed to defend what had been gained and Trotsky was tasked with creating it, becoming people's commissar for military affairs. He instigated mass conscription to provide manpower and recruited legions of former tsarist officers for leadership. He demanded extreme discipline to counter cowardice and desertions, assessing front lines and boosting morale by travelling thousands of miles aboard his armoured train. The opposition White Army was defeated and the civil war won.

Unofficially Lenin's deputy in what had been renamed the Communist Party, Trotsky never courted support from members, often browbeating those who disagreed with him. This intellectual arrogance counted heavily against him when Lenin fell ill in the early 1920s. By contrast, Joseph Stalin, as secretary, had placed beholden supporters in prominent positions, building a powerbase. When Lenin died, Stalin's loyalists ensured that he, and not Trotsky, took the leadership.

Trotsky challenged Stalin on issues of party democracy and economic planning but was denounced as a factionist and opportunist. The writing was on the wall. Expulsion from the party was followed by yet another exile, then banishment from the country in 1929. A number of literary works followed, many highly critical of Stalin.

With war looming in Europe, Trotsky arrived in Mexico in 1937. At the same time in Russia, orchestrated show trials accusing Trotsky of treason were taking place. Determined to silence his former comrade, Stalin sent agents to eliminate him. Ramón Mercader, a Spanish communist, succeeded, murdering Trotsky with an ice pick in August 1940. One of the Revolution's heroes was no more.

Bronstein to Trotsky to Snowball

Revolutionary Russia had a veritable farmyard of characters to inspire Orwell

In *Animal Farm*, George Orwell's 1945 allegorical account of the Russian Revolution and its subsequent totalitarian regime, pigs portray the key players. Old Major, a boar, is an amalgam of Marx and Lenin. Napoleon, a Berkshire pig, represents Stalin. Snowball, a commonly generic pink pig, reflects Trotsky's personality and history.

Orwell, a democratic socialist, had some sympathy with Old Major's vision, while the characterisation of Snowball as a rousing orator who fights determinedly during conflicts is quite positive when compared to other animals. Ultimately, Napoleon brands Snowball a traitor and banishes him from the farm, mirroring Trotsky's denunciation and exile. It was Orwell's deep mistrust of Stalin, originating in part when he fought alongside communists during the Spanish Civil War, which prompted him to create the fable to highlight the corrupting nature of power.

ANIMAL FARM

The man of steel

The firebrand forged from humble beginnings to claim Lenin's Soviet Union, Stalin drew a revolutionary Iron Curtain across Europe

On 6 December (OS) / 18 December (NS) 1878, the man who would be known to history as Joseph Stalin was born Ioseb Dzhugashvili. The name is Georgian, for this most implacable of Russian rulers was not himself Russian. His father was a cobbler and his mother a washerwoman. Stalin's father was a drunk who beat his son. The family spoke only Georgian and Stalin himself only learned to speak Russian at school; he never lost his thick accent. The young Stalin was bullied, while the smallpox he contracted at the age of seven permanently scarred his face and an accident at 12 left his left arm shorter than his right arm. But the boy was immensely strong and tough, and he learned to hide his feelings, while storing revenge in his heart. The culture into which he was born had a strong tradition of blood feuds and the young Stalin took its lessons to heart: never forget and never forgive, but wait, sometimes for years, to take revenge.

Stalin's devout mother wanted him to be a priest and in 1895, aged 16, sent him to the Russian Orthodox Seminary at Tiflis, capital of Georgia. It didn't work: the young Stalin became an atheist, saying, "You know, they are fooling us, there is no God." But in losing one religion, Stalin gained another: communism. At the seminary, he read the works of Lenin and Marx, and joined one of the proto-Bolshevik groups. The seminary finally expelled Stalin in 1899 and his involvement in revolutionary politics deepened, leading him to become, in 1902, a full-time revolutionary, living off crime and hand-outs. As an agitator and revolutionary, the young Stalin came often to the attention of the Tsar's secret police: he was arrested seven times between 1902 and 1913, being sent into internal exile within the vast boundaries of the Russian Empire. Stalin always seemed able to escape, however, leading to rumours that he was working as a double agent for the tsarist secret police.

In 1906, Stalin married for the first time. His wife, Ketevan Svanidze, gave birth to a son, Yakov, but died from typhus in 1907. Stalin was grief-stricken. At her funeral he said, "This creature softened my heart of stone. She died and with her died my last warm feelings for humanity." And when it came time for Svanidze to be buried, Stalin threw himself into the grave; only the approach of the secret police brought him to himself, and he fled.

It was after his wife's death that Ioseb Dzhugashvili took the name Stalin. In Russian, it means 'man of steel'.

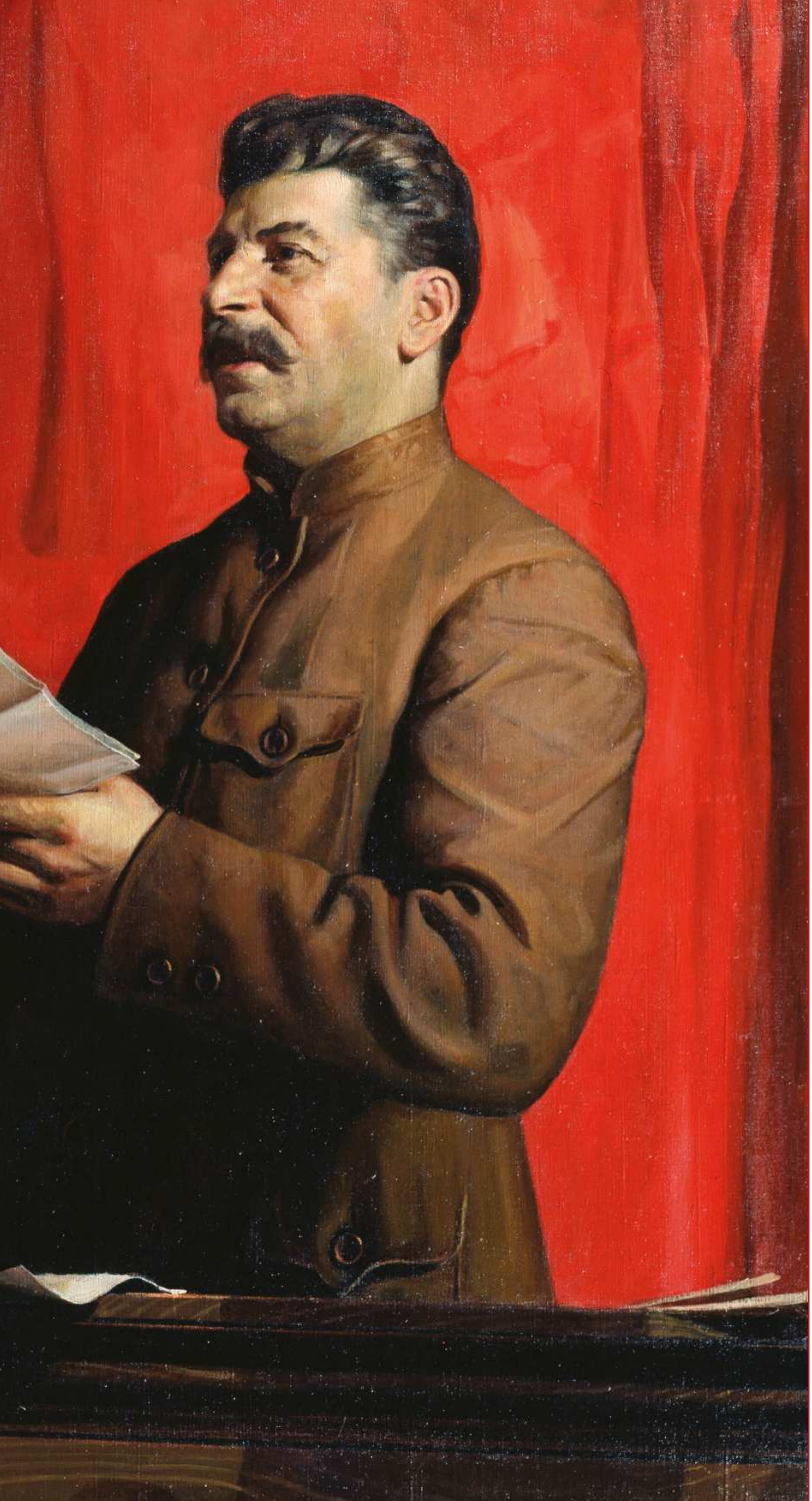
Stalin's rise up the Communist Party hierarchy was slow but steady. In between periods of exile, he edited the party newspaper *Pravda* and in 1917 he was elected to the party's Central Committee. With the abdication of the Tsar on 2/15 March

JOSEPH STALIN

b. 1878 d.1953

Brief Bio

For 30 years, Joseph Stalin was the hard man of the Soviet Union; the absolute ruler whose face was put, like Big Brother, on every wall. In pursuit of his plans, Stalin killed millions of Russians. In the conflagration of World War II, Stalin faced Hitler in a contest of dictators that would determine the course of history.



Joseph Stalin at the Potsdam Conference on 1 August 1945

Life in the time of Joseph Stalin

The Gulags

The Gulags were the forced-labour camps where Stalin incarcerated political opponents and petty criminals. Estimates vary, but it's likely that 14 million were imprisoned in the camps, and an additional 10 million sent into labour colonies and exile. The work was so brutal and the conditions so tough that about ten per cent of the inmates of the Gulags died each year.

The NKVD

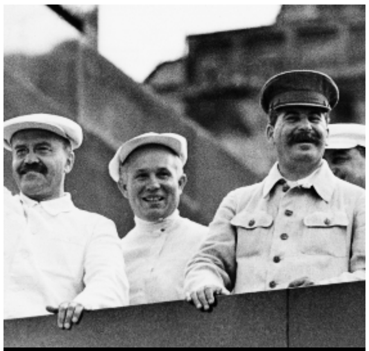
The People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs, or NKVD, was formed in 1934 and merged into successor secret police organisations in 1946. But during those 12 years it was the chief instrument of Stalin's repression, running the Gulags, conducting show trials and executing anyone whom Stalin saw as a threat. Their favoured method of execution was a bullet in the back of the head of a man made to kneel.

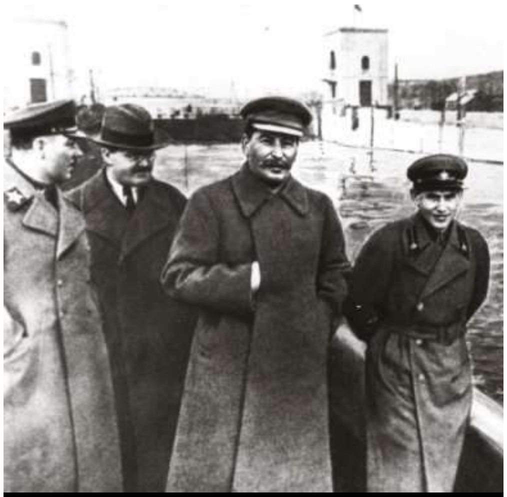
Show trials

A key feature of the Great Terror were the show trials held in Moscow between 1936 and 1938. In these trials, the most high-profile of the men Stalin wished to destroy – all the Bolsheviks who had fought alongside him in the 1917 Revolution – were put on public trial accused of increasingly outlandish crimes, including plots to assassinate Stalin. The trials were characterised by public confessions, protestations of recovered loyalty to Stalin and the execution of the defendants. At the time, many Western observers believed the trials to be fair, unaware of how the NKVD had broken down the defendants by interrogation and torture before the trials.

How Stalin did business

Stalin's Soviet Union was probably the most thoroughgoing autocracy in history, but he still needed people to convey his will to the country. As Stalin aged, he conducted more business from his dacha, his country house outside Moscow, or over dinner at the Kremlin. Stalin preferred to sleep through the day and work through the night, so his inner circle was often summoned to begin their day in the evening – often beginning with a cowboy film in the Kremlin movie theatre. As the movies were in English, a Politburo member translated the film into Russian as they watched. The film over, Stalin would have dinner with his officials after midnight, and then demand that they stay with him through the night. While Stalin himself drank in moderation, he would insist his party comrades knocked back the vodka – drunkenness revealed weaknesses that he could later use against them. As part of his rituals of control, Stalin would humiliate his officials in front of the gathering, on one occasion forcing the 60-year-old Nikita Khrushchev to dance a Ukrainian folk dance. Khrushchev would later succeed Stalin as ruler of the Soviet Union but, as he said, "When Stalin says dance, a wise man dances." Another reason for Khrushchev's survival was that he took daytime naps to make sure not to fall asleep during these late-night sessions. As he noted later, "Things went badly for those who dozed off at Stalin's table."


Dressed up to watch an athletic parade through Moscow in 1936, Stalin stands out from his foreign minister Molotov (far left) and his eventual successor, Nikita Khruschev (centre)


When Nikolai Yezhov (right), head of the NKVD, was purged, all traces of him were expunged from records

1917, the future of Russia was up for grabs and Lenin was determined to grasp it. Launching the second phase of the Russian Revolution, Lenin made his bid for power.

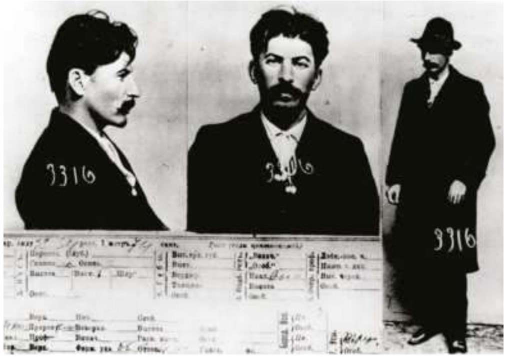
In the battle of colours, the Reds defeated the Whites (communists against anti-communists) and Lenin assumed control. In the confused fighting and in-fighting of the next five years, Stalin did little to distinguish himself beyond displaying a particular ruthlessness towards deserters and enemies, but nevertheless Lenin appointed him General Secretary of the Communist Party in 1922. This enabled Stalin to place allies into many important positions in the party.

Lenin was forced into semi-retirement by the strokes he suffered in May and December of 1922. Although he turned against Stalin in the final two years of his life, Stalin was able to suppress Lenin's criticism of him so that when Lenin died, on 21 January 1924, he was able to win the subsequent power struggle, gradually concentrating power in his own hands.

Initially, Stalin saw the main threat to his power as coming from the Old Bolsheviks: the committed communist revolutionaries who had helped Lenin push through the Russian Revolution. Stalin moved to isolate them: Trotsky was exiled, while others were stripped of power. But even removed from power, Stalin's paranoia still saw the Old Bolsheviks as possible centres of opposition and between 1934 and 1939 he moved to liquidate every possible opponent to his rule, in a period that came to be called the Great Terror. The Old Bolsheviks were, one by one, arrested, tortured and then put on show trials where they confessed to a series of bizarre crimes against the Soviet Union, while professing their undying love for Stalin. Their encomiums to Stalin were given in return for promises that their families would go unharmed after their executions but frequently no sooner had the Old Bolsheviks been executed than Stalin broke his promise and executed their relatives.

The man without mercy had already displayed his utter ruthlessness. In collectivising agriculture, Stalin liquidated an entire class of Russian peasantry, known as the Kulaks, while the famine in the Ukraine that killed approximately 5 million people was the result of deliberate government policies. Historians now estimate that Stalin was responsible for the deaths of 15 million of his own countrymen during his 30 years in power.

Stalin married again in 1919. His second wife, Nadezhda Alliluyeva, gave him two children, a



Defining moment

The young revolutionary

1902

After leaving his seminary education, Stalin embraced revolutionary politics and soon came to the notice of the Tsar's secret police. After organising strikes and demonstrations against the Tsar, Stalin was detained by the police and spent a year in prison before escaping early in 1904. In 1907, Stalin masterminded a bank robbery to obtain funds for his revolutionary work. As this mugshot shows, Stalin deliberately chose a slovenly and unprepossessing appearance, marking himself as a man apart from the usually impeccably dressed Marxist intellectuals. Stalin was deliberately rejecting middle-class values and portraying himself as a man of the people.

Timeline

1879

Birth
Stalin's birth was as unpropitious as Napoleon's. Born in Georgia into a poor family, a long way from the centre of power and influence, nobody would have foreseen the impact he would have on history.
6/18 December 1879

Marriage
For the first and only time in his adult life, Stalin let someone else into his heart. When his wife, 'Kato' Svanidze, died in December 1907, Stalin permanently closed himself to any future human vulnerability.
16/29 July 1906

Climbing the tree
When civil war broke out after the October Revolution that brought the Bolsheviks to power, Lenin appointed Stalin to a five-man Politburo alongside Trotsky. Stalin was now very near the centre of power in the new Russia.
1917

Defining moment

Mastery 1924 - 1929

Lenin died on 21 January 1924. Stalin had manouevred himself into being Lenin's likely successor, which enabled him to suppress Lenin's criticism of him in the final testament Lenin had prepared. During the next five years, Stalin gradually isolated and removed his rivals in the Central Committee. Leon Trotsky was expelled from the Communist Party and went into exile, while men like Zinoviev and Kamenev, who had helped him against Trotsky, were themselves expelled from the party and only allowed to rejoin after they had submitted themselves totally to Stalin. Stalin was now more master than the Tsar had ever been.

Stalin at the 14th Congress of the Communist Party in 1925. This was a gathering of delegates from the Communist Party, and was ostensibly the supreme governing body of the party, from which all policies were handed down

> "The young Stalin took to heart the lessons of the blood feud: never forget and never forgive"

son and a daughter, but family life was strained and Nadezhda committed suicide in 1932. Stalin lived entirely for himself and had no interest in founding a dynasty; his children were not favoured. Yakov, his son by his first wife, also attempted suicide but missed; Stalin merely commented, "He can't even shoot straight." Yakov subsequently fought in the Soviet Army during World War II and was captured, dying in Sachsenhausen concentration camp. Vasily, his son by Nadezhda Alliluyeva, survived him but died from chronic alcoholism just before his 41st birthday, while his only daughter, Svetlana, eventually defected to the West, fleeing to America in 1967.

By the late 1930s, Stalin knew that he would have to face, at some point, a showdown with Hitler's Germany. But, preoccupied by internal politics and convinced that the pact his foreign minister, Molotov, had signed in 1939 would ensure German non-aggression, Stalin refused to listen to the increasingly agitated warnings of his military. When German forces rolled into Russia in June 1941, Stalin was caught completely unaware and was initially paralysed by indecision. But with the Germans pursuing brutal policies of ethnic cleansing, Stalin was able to rally the Russian people in what is known in Russia as the Great Patriotic War. In the great battles of Moscow, Leningrad and Stalingrad, Hitler's armies were destroyed, and the Red Army began its relentless advance westwards.

With the Soviet Union bled white by its losses during the war, Stalin was determined to ensure that the countries the Red Army occupied became satellite states of the Soviet Union. At the Potsdam Conference in 1945, Stalin set out his terms and by 1946 Winston Churchill had learned enough to say that "an iron curtain" was being drawn across the European continent. Stalin imposed communist governments on the countries of Eastern Europe, effectively drawing them under his control, while the former allies gazed with suspicion upon each other through the new curtain.

Communist sympathisers in America had passed enough information to the Russians for them to develop and build their own atomic bomb by 29 August 1949. With the Soviet Union now armed with nuclear weapons too, the first phase of the Cold War began. Stalin imposed a blockade on the Allied sectors of Berlin but the Berlin airlift ensured that West Berlin remained an exclave within communist East Germany.

Despite his absolute mastery of the Soviet Union, Stalin remained paranoid, and in the early 1950s began another purge. But before it could begin properly, Stalin was struck down by a stroke early on 1 March 1953. He'd given orders not to be disturbed when he went to bed, so his guards left him undisturbed until 10pm of that day. He was found lying by his bed, unable to move or speak, his pyjamas soaked in stale urine. The man who had killed millions of his own people spent his last four days on earth trapped in his own body. Then, according to his daughter, his eyes opened for the final time with "a terrible look – either mad or angry and full of the fear of death". Stalin died at 9.50pm on 5th March 1953.

Defining moment

The Great Patriotic War

22 June 1941 - 9 May 1945

Despite the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Hitler invaded the Soviet Union with the express aim of destroying the country and ethnically cleansing vast areas of Russia. He was clear he was fighting a war of extermination. After the initial shock, Stalin rallied Russia in the Great Patriotic War. In this inferno, Stalin relaxed some of his old sanctions, allowing many churches of the Russian Orthodox Church to re-open, and rewarding his best generals. Crucially, and unlike Hitler, Stalin quickly learned to leave the micro-management of the war to his generals, while retaining control of the overall strategy.

1953

Industrial revolution
The Russia Stalin ruled was a largely pre-industrial country. Stalin was determined to change that, and began a process of centrally-planned industrialisation organised into Five-Year Plans. It eventually worked, but at a great human cost.
1928 - 1938

Collectivisation
To force food production upwards, he instituted a policy whereby the smallholdings of peasants were consolidated into massive, state-run farms. When targets weren't met, he identified the Kulaks, wealthier peasants, as his obstacle and liquidated them.
1928 - 1940

The Terror
Stalin's paranoid mind turned towards eliminating any possible rival. So he began the Great Terror, liquidating all the surviving Old Bolsheviks and purging the upper levels of the Army and the Party.
1934 - 1939

Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact
The Nazi and communist regimes, simultaneously watchful and fearful of each other, signed a non-aggression pact that also contained secret clauses carving up eastern Europe between them. Stalin invaded Poland 16 days after Hitler did.
23 August 1939

Russia's bomb
The USA was the world's sole nuclear power for just four years. Thanks to extensive infiltration of the Manhattan Project, Soviet intelligence was able to provide enough information to Russian scientists for them to create their own atomic bomb.
29 August 1949

The end
After suffering a stroke on 1 March, Stalin was left trapped in his body while his magnates, terrified he might recover, dithered over sending for medical care. The fear he inspired condemned Stalin to four days of agony before he eventually died.
5 March 1953

ЛЕНГИЗ
КНИГИ
ПО ВСЕМ ОТРАСЛЯМ ЗНАНИЯ
ЛЕНГИЗ
100

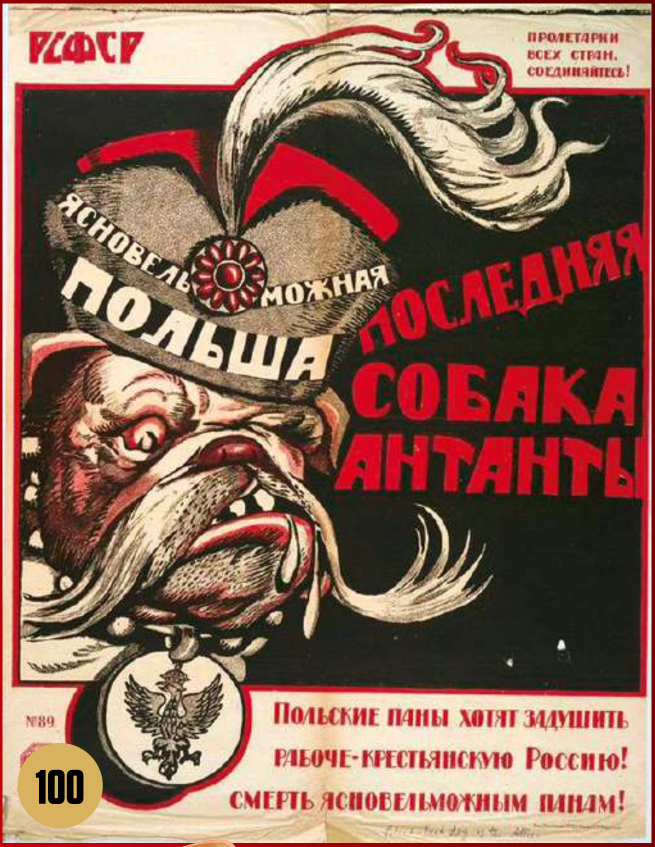
96
КОРМИТЕ ДѢТЕЙ ЗАЩИТНИКОВЪ РОДИНЫ
ПРИБАВКУ ПАЙКА СЕМЬЯМЪ СОЛДАТЪ ЗАЩИТНИКАМЪ СВОБОДЫ И НАРОДНОГО МІРА

Revolution

The dramatic series of events that toppled a royal regime and ushered in decades of communist control over Russia

96 **First blood: The February Revolution**
100 **Lenin's bloody Revolution**
110 **The House of Special Purpose**

100


РСФСР
Пролетарии всех стран, соединяйтесь!
Ясновельможная
Польша
Последняя собака Антанты
№89
Польские паны хотят задушить рабоче-крестьянскую Россию!
Смерть ясновельможным панам!
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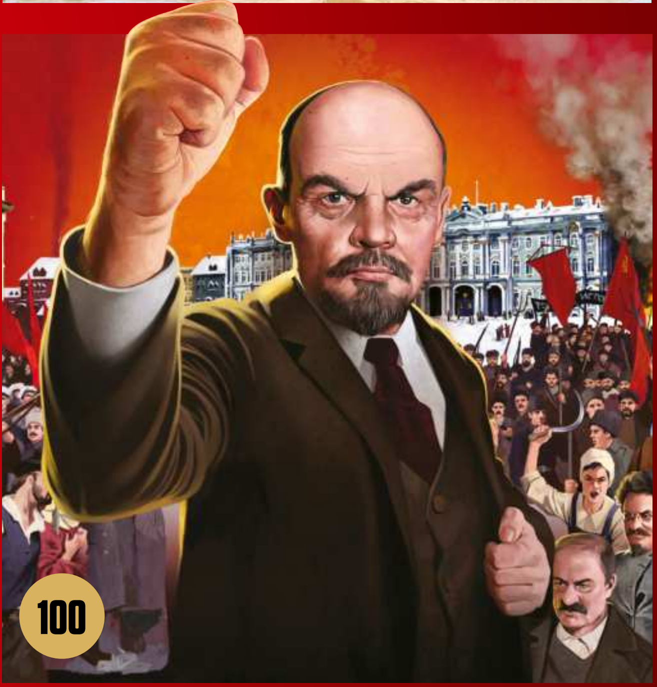
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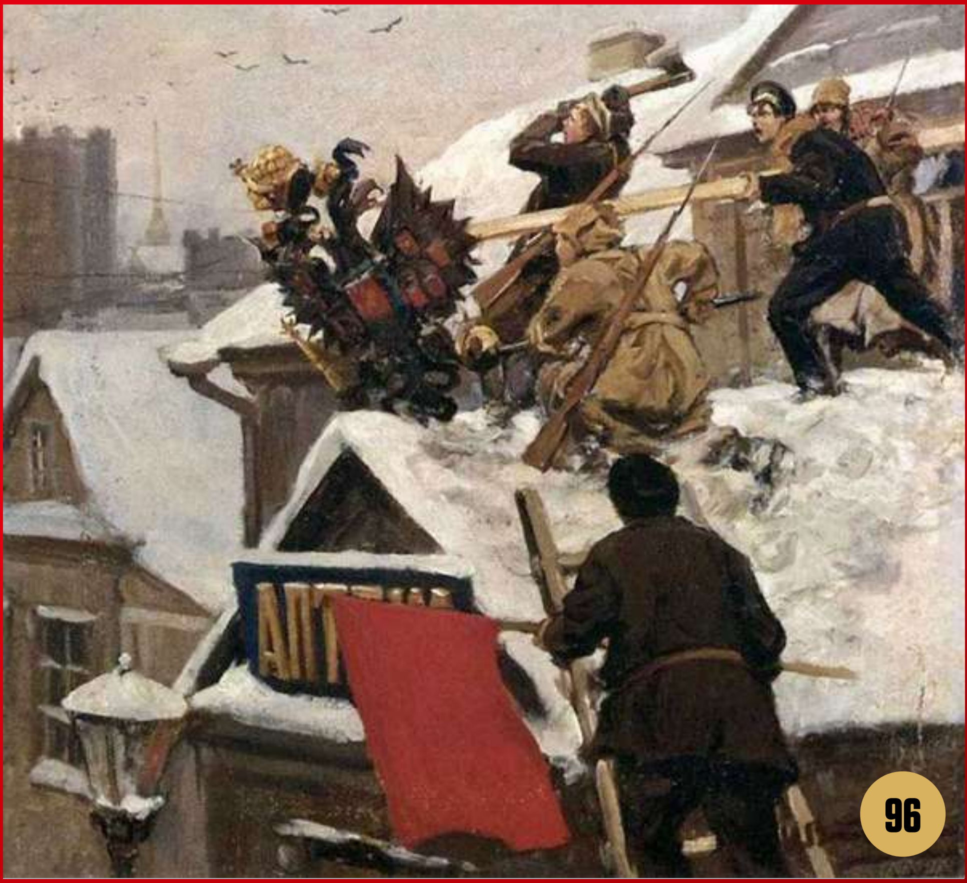
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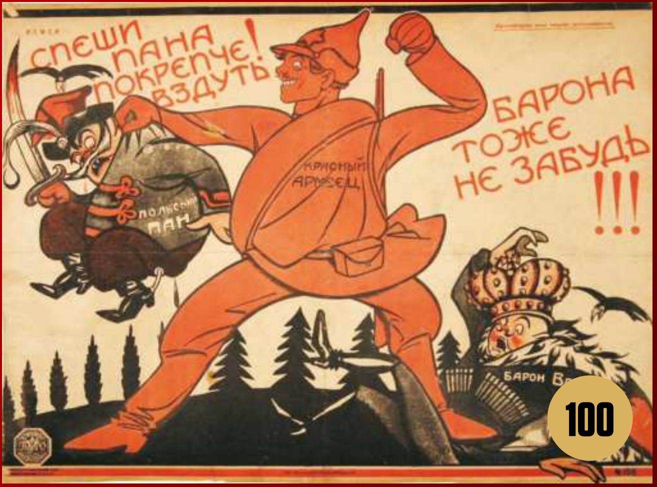

Спеши пана покрепче вздуть!
Барона тоже не забудь!!!
Красный армеец
Польский пан
100

First blood: The February Revolution

In February 1917, Russia's capital city exploded in revolution. Workers, soldiers, sailors – and eventually the government itself – mutinied and forced the Tsar to abdicate

By the middle of February 1917, Russia was in turmoil. Any goodwill engendered between the classes by the initial rush of wartime patriotism had been swept away by defeat on the battlefield, in the workplace and marketplace, and at all levels of government.

The Russian Army had scored decisive victories in the first months of World War I but this was quickly followed by brutal losses at Tannenberg and the Masurian Lakes, along with the loss of Russian Poland in 1915. Battlefield supply lines were never successfully established, and the demoralised army, starved and sometimes forced to share rifles or engage in battle with no bullets, was stretched almost beyond its ability to continue.

But continue it did, with soldiers threatened into action by officers desperate for victory. These conditions could not continue for long and by the end of January 1917, over 5 million soldiers were dead, wounded or missing, with another 33,000 deserting each month.

At home, conditions were little better. Russia's economy had been booming prior to the war but the country was now cut off from its European markets. Moreover, the diversion of almost all rolling stock for the war effort meant that the use of railways to divert products out of the country in other directions proved impossible. Inflation soared and wages became almost worthless while privation threatened the cities. The countryside around Petrograd was somewhat better at first but was soon flooded with refugees fleeing ahead of the German Army as it drove further into Russia.

The people's faith in the government was broken by a long series of inexplicably bad decisions at the highest levels. In September 1915, for example, Tsar Nicholas II left the capital to take personal control of the military, leaving his wife, Alexandra Feodorovna, in charge. He trusted her – unfortunately, no one else did.

Alexandra was severely hampered by two things – her German birth and the way she had cut herself off from most of Russian society – and she had with few real allies apart from her trusted friend Rasputin. Together, they proved unable to rule in Nicholas' absence, appointing and dismissing government ministers at such a dizzying rate that no one had a chance to get to grips with the unrest building up in Petrograd.

On 18 February (OS) / 3 March (NS) 1917, the workers at the Putilov factory, Russia's largest production plant, dealt the first decisive blow in the February Revolution by striking in their thousands, taking to the streets in protest. The workers remained in the streets through the following days until 23 February/ 8 March when women – celebrating International Women's Day – joined them throughout the city. The protest was now

Дни революции. Зна
1917г.

Workers from the Putilov plant demonstrated en masse

Symbols of the monarchy were burned in the streets

ОРМИТЕ
ДѢТЕЙ
АСЧИТНИКОВЪ
РОДЫ
ПРИБАВКУ
СЕМЬЯМЪ СОЛД
ЗАЩИТНИКАМЪ СВ
И НАРОДНОГО М

The Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies

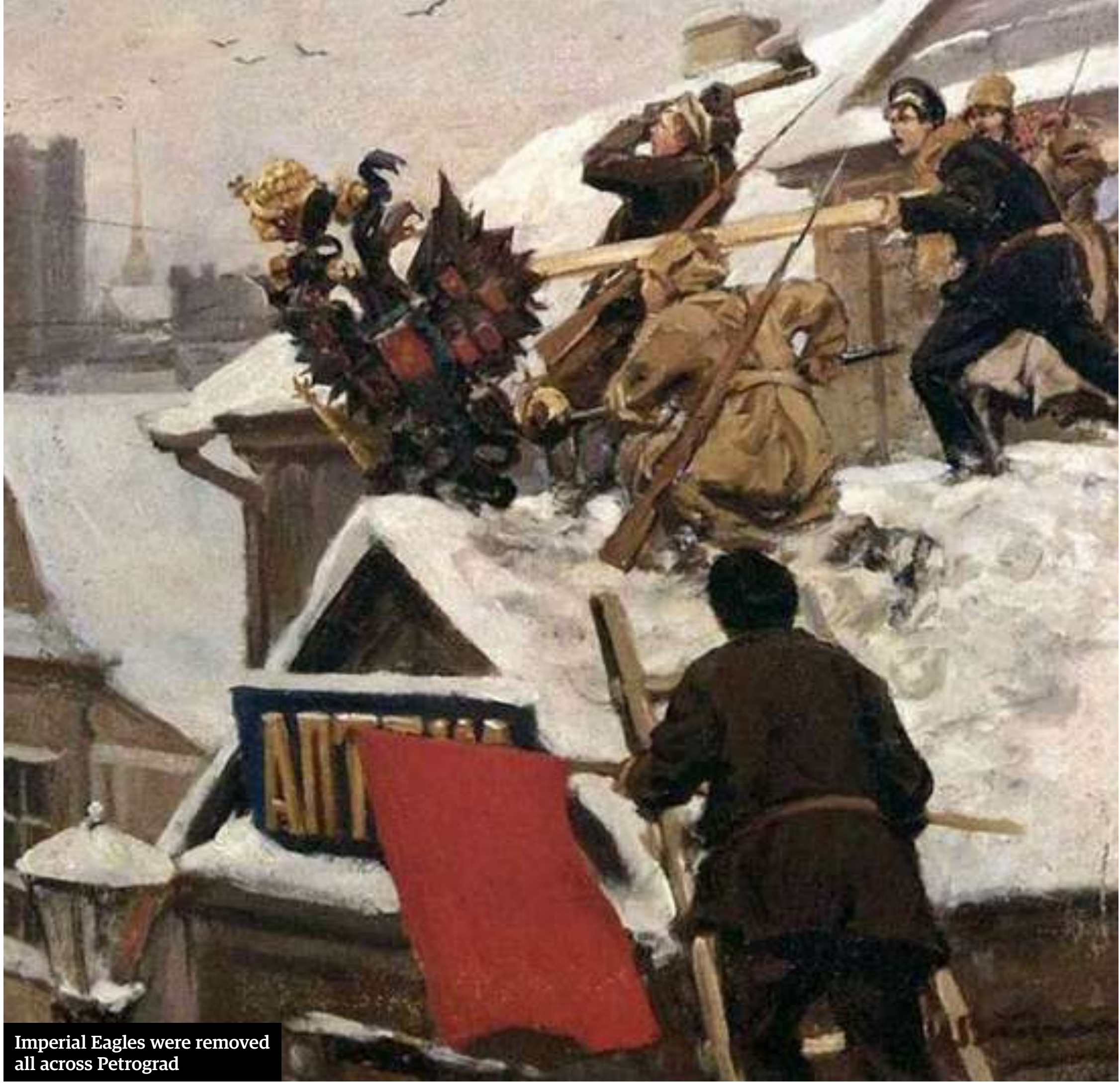
Finding a better future for Petrograd's legions of workers

Before February 1917, Petrograd's workers were represented by the Central Workers' Group, which was founded in November 1915 to liaise with the Central Military-Industrial Committee. Deteriorating factory conditions and 1916's worsening economic situation drove the Worker's Group to increasingly radical activity. As a result of encouraging strikes and adopting revolutionary language, the leaders were arrested on 27 January/9 February 1917 and imprisoned in the Peter and Paul Fortress on the orders of the Imperial Government. They were freed by mutinying soldiers a month later as Petrograd exploded into the February Revolution.

That night, some 200 people gathered at Tauride Palace to elect an executive committee. These new leaders were chosen largely from the Mensheviks and were chaired by a Georgian revolutionary named Nicolas Chkheidze. On 28 February/13 March, representatives from the factories and military were elected as deputies, swelling the Petrograd Soviet to almost 3,000 members.

The soviet established an uneasy relationship with the Provisional Committee, treating them as a necessary evil during and after the February Revolution to establish legitimacy, but they were always in competition for supremacy. Known as the Dual Power, the rivalry continued through the defeat and arrest of the soviet's leaders after the violence of the July Days, and into the resurgence of the Petrograd Soviet under Lenin and Trotsky, leading to the October Revolution and the eventual defeat of the Provisional Government.

A contemporary postcard showing Nicolas Chkheidze, Chairman of the Petrograd Soviet, speaking to mutineers outside Tauride Palace



Imperial Eagles were removed all across Petrograd

focused against the Duma, the imperial family, the war and food shortages, the latter caused by the disastrous decision of the government to begin rationing bread and flour.

More and more Petrograd residents and workers began pouring into the streets as the so-called bread riots began. By the time the sun rose on 24 February/9 March, over 200,000 people were in the streets demanding the end of rationing, the war and the autocratic government.

By the afternoon of the next day, more than 250,000 people were rioting in the streets and Petrograd's factories were all but shut down. The Duma was undecided on if they should take action and the Tsar telegraphed the Petrograd garrison commander directly, ordering him to disperse the rioters and end the strikes through use of force. Finally, at the end of the day, the Duma's chairman announced that the Nicholas had ordered the government to stand down until April.

On 26 February/ 11 March, the Petrograd garrison began to mutiny as soldiers from the Pavlovsky Replacement Regiment took to the streets, firing at policemen who were attempting to control the crowds. An attempt was made to bring the soldiers back under the control of the garrison commander but all of Petrograd's regiments were in mutiny within 24 hours and had gone over to the revolutionaries, transferring some 40,000 rifles and other arms to the rioters in the streets. Imperial Eagles and other insignia were torn from buildings and statues – the atmosphere was ripe for the end of Romanov rule.

On that same day, with the majority of the Duma following the Tsar's order to stand down, several members, together with a few bankers and some factory owners, formed the so-called Provisional Committee of the State Duma. Declaring itself the legitimate government of the Russian Empire until such time as order could be restored, it had little political legitimacy as it was formed without the benefit of an election. It held no mandate and lacked acknowledged support from the population.

In another part of the city that day, the leading socialists gathered together and formed the first Petrograd Soviet, which was in a far superior position to the Provisional Committee. The soviet controlled the city's workers and soldiers, had seized control of strategic locations throughout the capital including the city arsenal, and had effectively stopped the city and its secret police forces from functioning.

The Provisional Committee and the Petrograd Soviet would join together in alliance as a Dual Authority wherein the former would represent the interests of the bourgeoisie and the latter would

СЛАВА ЖЕНЩИНАМЪ БОРЦАМЪ ЗА СВОБОДУ
МАНИФЕСТАЦIЯ ЖЕНЩИНЪ

Defining moment

International Women's Day and the bread riots

23 February/8 March 1917

International Women's Day became a holiday in Russia in 1917 after women gained suffrage. On that day, the women of Petrograd seized the opportunity to take to the streets, joining the Putilov workers in their strike, but also to protest for "Bread and Peace", meaning the end to food shortages and the end to Russia's participation in World War I. Leon Trotsky wrote, "We did not imagine that this 'Women's Day' would inaugurate the revolution… In the morning… textile workers left their work in several factories… which led to mass strike… all went into the streets."

The road to Revolution

1917

- **Putilov workers' strike**
  The strike snowballed, igniting demonstrations throughout Petrograd. Worker strikes were not unknown in the Russian Empire and were almost always associated with some revolutionary activity. This strike is the one that sparked the February Revolution.
  18 February/3 March

1917

- **Petrograd garrison ordered out**
  On the Tsar's orders, the Petrograd army garrison was called out against the strikes. Numbering close to 180,000 men, it was made up of reservists and was among the least reliable troops in the army.
  25 February/10 March

1917

- **The dissolution of the Duma**
  The Duma's president advised Nicholas by telegram that only major concessions could halt the revolution. But the Tsar unwisely refused to make a deal, considering the existence of the Duma itself a compromise to the autocracy.
  25 February/10 March

1917

- **Troops fire on the strikers**
  In response to the Tsar's order, soldiers from the Petrograd garrison fired on the crowds, killing hundreds of strikers. The regiment collapsed into rebellion – the soldiers identified more with the people than they did with Nicholas.
  26 February/11 March

1917

- **Revolutionaries released from the Peter and Paul Fortress**
  When the soldiers mutinied, they stormed the Peter and Paul Fortress and released the political prisoners held there, who were able then to use their experience to advance the Revolution and create the Petrograd Soviet.
  27 February/12 March

speak for those of the proletariat. Members of the Provisional Government brought to the table their bureaucratic experience, which the soviets did not possess. As such, they lent the veneer of legitimacy to the soviet's roots in the revolution.

But the soviet left few confused over which authority was more powerful. On 1 March/14 March, the Petrograd Soviet issued the clearly worded Order #1: "The orders of the Military Commission of the State Duma [the Provisional Government] shall be executed only in such cases as do not conflict with the orders and resolution of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies."

Far away from Petrograd and finally roused by continued warnings of revolution, the Tsar left his military headquarters and was attempting to reach his palace at Tsarskoye Selo, just outside the capital. But revolutionaries controlled the railway in and around the city, and the imperial train was waved off and shunted around the countryside, eventually coming to rest at the town of Pskov on the evening of 1/14 March. The following afternoon, representatives from the Provisional Government and the military advised Nicholas to abdicate, which he did, for himself and – as an afterthought – for his son. In the following days, when the Tsar's brother refused to succeed him, 304 years of Romanov rule came to a quiet end.

One uncertain and tumultuous month later, Vladimir Lenin arrived in Petrograd on 3 April/16 April. With characteristic opportunism, he immediately began to undermine the Provisional Government by publishing the ten April Theses in the revolutionary newspaper *Pravda* on 4 April/ 17 April. He condemned the Provisional Government, denounced any continued support of bourgeois imperialism, called for an end to Russia's participation in World War I, and for the nationalisation of banks, land and other state assets, the levelling of wages across the board, and even the abolition of the military and police.

> "The next day, more than 250,000 people were rioting in the streets and Petrograd's factories were all but shut down"

Barricades were put up across the city in February 1917

There was some resistance to the Theses from other socialist exiles returning to Russia – they favoured a more moderate approach. But Lenin forcefully echoed the desires of the Petrograd Soviet, and gradually, over the next three months, the idea of an armed proletariat uprising against the Provisional Government took root, leading directly to the explosion of violence in the July Days. This temporarily forced the Bolsheviks underground, but they would soon regroup - and seize power.

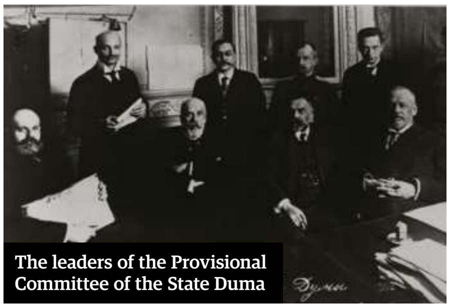
The Provisional Committee

On 27 February/12 March 1917, the Tsar ordered the Duma dissolved and Russia was left spiralling towards revolution without a legitimate government. Most ministers and deputies withdrew to the safety of the admiralty and refused to disobey their leader. But 12 of them gathered to create the Provisional Committee of the State Duma.

The Committee moved quickly to declare itself the legitimate Russian government but its validity was shaky – it was acting outside the government's legal framework without the support of the people. In reality, the Committee would share control with the Petrograd Soviet and, though the practical power was in the hands of the soviet, the former Duma members brought their considerable bureaucratic and organisational skills to the table, proving themselves valuable to the Revolution.

The Committee existed as an independent body for just three days. In that time, 24 commissars were placed in ministerial positions, thus invalidating the former Duma, whose members were arrested and detained. The Tsar was also located, confronted and compelled to abdicate before being arrested himself.

On 2 March/15 March, the Committee joined with the Petrograd Soviet to create the Provisional Government, and essentially ceased to exist, though it was not officially dissolved until September 1917. Henceforth the Communist Party would hold power.


The leaders of the Provisional Committee of the State Duma

Defining moment

Soldiers mutiny and join the Revolution 27 February/12 March 1917

Hundreds of Russian workers lay dead in the streets, killed by the Petrograd garrison. It was a turning point, with undeniable similarities to Bloody Sunday. Confined to barracks for the remainder of the day, there was time to discuss events and consider the failing war and growing disaffection with Imperial rule. By the morning of 27 February/12 March, the garrison's regiments were in full mutiny, pouring into the streets, hunting police and officers alike, releasing prisoners from jail, and providing arms to the strikers. Power transferred to the soldiers and the government's authority melted away.

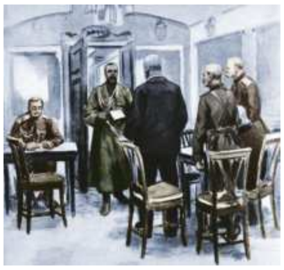
Братская могила.

1917

The Petrograd Soviet is formed
In January, the leadership of the Central Workers' Group were arrested and imprisoned. They were freed by mutinying soldiers in February/March and the chairman convened a meeting to organise and elect the Petrograd Soviet.
27 February/12 March

1917

The Provisional Committee is formed
12 members of the former Duma formed this Committee with the intention of shepherding Russia through the time of the Revolution and its aftermath to the formation of a new and legitimate government.
27 February/12 March



Defining moment

Nicholas abdicates 2 March/15 March 1917

Bowing to the advice of his generals, Nicholas II abdicated on his train. He also abdicated on behalf of his son, which was not strictly legal, and wrote a manifesto naming his brother, Grand Duke Michael, as the next Tsar. When the Grand Duke refused the throne unless it was offered by a legitimate Russian government, three centuries of Romanov rule came to an end. Before two years had passed, 18 members of the royal family had been killed by the Revolution.

1917

Funeral of the victims of the Revolution
The Petrograd Soviet held this funeral as a demonstration of unity. All day, revolutionaries came from to the Field of Mars carrying red coffins containing the bodies of the dead.
10/23 March

1917

Lenin comes back
Lenin returned from exile with the assistance of the German government. It was expected that he would take advantage of the chaos in Russia to incite revolution. His actions would sweep the Bolsheviks to power.
3/16 April

Lenin's bloody REVOLUTION

Years of civil unrest came to a head in October 1917, as Lenin rode a revolutionary wave into Saint Petersburg and turned society upside down

THE ROAD TO REVOLUTION

May 1896
Nicholas II is crowned Tsar, making clear he'll continue the autocratic rule of Alexander III.

July 1903
The Russian Social Democrat party splits into two factions: the Bolsheviks, under Lenin, and the Mensheviks.

January 1905
Tsarist troops open fire on demonstrators in Saint Petersburg, causing widespread strikes. June sees a mutiny aboard the battleship Potemkin.

October 1905
Nicholas II ends the unrest by promising increased civil liberties for the proletariat. The Duma is formed.

July 1914
At the outbreak of war, Nicholas II assumes control of the Russian Army. His family come under the damaging influence of Rasputin.

February 1917
Protests turn to riots in Saint Petersburg. The city falls to insurgents; the Duma collapses into chaos.

March-April 1917
Nicholas II abdicates and the Provisional Government forms. Lenin returns and sets up a base in Saint Petersburg.

July 1917
Alexander Kerensky becomes prime minister of the government, but it remains largely powerless, lacking legitimisation.

October 1917
Bolsheviks take Saint Petersburg and storm the Winter Palace. Lenin controls Russia.

November 1917
In elections, the Bolsheviks lose. Clever politicking from Lenin sees his party hold onto and consolidate power.

КРАСНАЯ ГВАРДІЯ
ЗАВОДА
ВУЛКАНЪ
II. ГР.

Members of the Red Guard in October 1917

Guns roared, thousands of voices yelled from the streets in defiance, and on 23 October (OS) / 5 November (NS) 1917, the massed supporters of Vladimir Lenin laid siege to Saint Petersburg's Winter Palace, the site of an ineffectual government, and the capstone event of a socialist revolution. For Lenin and his troops it was both a political and an ideological victory: the triumphant end to years of secretive theorising and plotting, many of them spent by Lenin in exile, before he returned to Russia to "liberate" his people. If the celebrations were short lived, the inversion of society to replace an autocracy with a socialist system was an extraordinary achievement.

Russia, even as late as the late-1800s, had seen a nobility of about a million presiding over a peasantry of 97 million; according to an 1897 census there was practically no middle class. Industry was overwhelmingly agricultural, with the peasantry working on land that belonged to the rich minority. An act of 1861 turned some of this land over to communal peasant ownership, but the government had provided compensation to the landowners, and the peasant communes were now responsible for the repayment of this debt to the government. These payments were abolished in 1905, but until then, the peasants were as beholden to their communes as they had been to the landowners. The population was also steadily increasing, which meant there wasn't enough land to go around, leading to unrest. The oil and railway industry booms of the industrial revolution happened slower and later in Russia than in other parts of Europe, but when they arrived they started to create a growing middle class more inclined towards western-style capitalist business interests than had hitherto been the Russian norm. Workers migrated to industrial areas, but while some official monitoring nominally took place, the overcrowded slum conditions workers had to endure were appalling.

Russia at this time was presided over by the Tsar, whose rule was propped up by the army, the police, the Russian Orthodox Church, the land-owning nobility and the bureaucracy. Alexander II (1855-81) had brought in some reforms, such as elective assemblies to represent peasant agricultural and industrial workers in local government. Alexander III (1881-94), however, began to roll back these changes, and Nicholas II, the last Tsar of Russia, disappointed many by sticking to that hard line. He considered any notion of societal reform "a senseless dream" and let it be known that he was resolutely committed to the principle of autocracy.

☭ "POPULISM WAS ABANDONED, AND IN ITS PLACE THE IDEAS OF A POLITICAL ANALYST CALLED KARL MARX BEGAN TO FIND FAVOUR"

As early as the 1860s various seeds of revolutionary thought were beginning to be sown. Movements like The Populists began musing on a future moving away from a monolithic state and more towards a country with a multiplicity of mutually supportive communes. These idealistic notions hit something of a bump when students from the universities started taking the message out into the countryside and found the peasant agricultural labourers actually hostile to their ideas, thinking the students' well-intentioned notions ridiculous, lofty and unachievable. Populism was abandoned, and in its place the ideas of a political analyst called Karl Marx began to find favour.

Marx was often frustrated at the way his followers simplified his complex writings and ran with them in directions he didn't approve of, but the key idea of his that people latched on to revolved around the control of the means of production. History, Marx believed, was a never-ending process of change in which particular social classes exploited the labour of everyone else and established dominance, only for their hegemony to become outmoded, after which they were naturally replaced by another up-and-coming class drawing power from unanticipated sources. They in turn would eventually be replaced for the same reasons, and so the cycle would continue onwards.

By this process, the bourgeois (the middle class) in Russia would, according to the theory, replace the aristocracy, and only once that had happened would

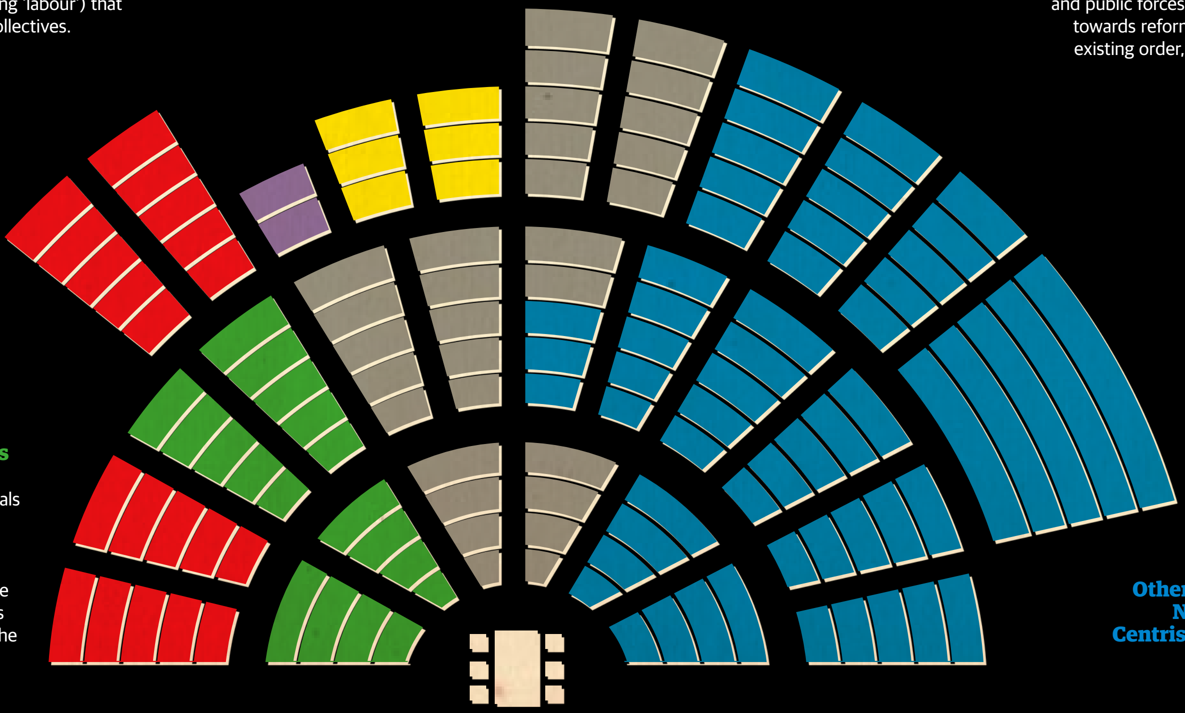
THE STATE DUMA

The Duma was instituted to represent the voices of working people in 1905. As Lenin launched his revolution, its seats were occupied as follows:

Trudoviks - 10 seats
The Labour Group or 'Trudoviks' were a breakaway from the Socialist Revolutionaries, since the SR had refused to participate in the Duma. They were a moderate socialist party (the name 'Trudovik' meaning 'labour') that grew out of small worker collectives.

Bolsheviks - 15 seats
Lenin's faction of the Russian Social Democratic Party was committed to the overthrow of the tsarist autocracy and the redistribution of power to the proletariat. Unlike the Mensheviks, the Bolsheviks still believed that a small ruling elite was necessary.

Progressists - 41 seats
The Progressive Party consisted of moderate liberals who believed the time was right for the bourgeois, not the proletariat, to assume control of Russia. Two of the party's prominent members would go on to be part of the Provisional Government.



Octobrists - 95 seats
The Union of October 17 was a non-revolutionary conservative liberal party looking for compromise and co-operation between the government and public forces. They were working towards reforms to strengthen the existing order, not to overthrow it.

Constitutional Democratic Party - 57 seats
Informally known as the 'Kadets', the Constitutional Democratic Party were liberals who had the support of professionals and academics. They were committed to workers' rights, through policies like the introduction of the eight-hour working day.

Others (Non-Russian National Groups, Centrists, Nationalists, Rightists) - 230

the proletariat (the working class) supersede the bourgeois in their own revolution. Rather than leaving these predicted events to work themselves out in their own time, however, various groups intent on forcing the process started to come into existence. The Social Revolutionary movement grew out of Populism, still intent on establishing a vast mass of worker cooperatives. But the Russian Social Democrats were the ones that really ran with Marx's theories. Finding that they couldn't quite agree even among themselves, the Social Democrats soon split into two factions: the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. The key figure of the Mensheviks was Julius Tsederbaum, who would come to be known as Martov. Central to Bolshevism was Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, later better known as Lenin. Martov believed in a grass-roots democracy where everyone had an equal voice. Lenin insisted on the necessity of a small intellectual elite controlling the revolution.

As it turned out, revolution first broke out organically in 1905 without either of them being directly responsible. On 9 January, a union of factory workers demonstrated outside the Winter Palace in Saint Petersburg and were fired on by the military, resulting in more than 100 deaths. A general strike followed; several officials were assassinated, including Tsar Nicholas II's uncle Grand Duke Sergei, the governor-general of Moscow; peasant revolts broke out in various provinces; and the crew of the battleship Potemkin mutinied. Tsar Nicholas was persuaded into the concession of forming a national parliament. This was divided into two houses, the Council of State (the upper house) and the Duma (the lower house), which would give the proletariat a represented, elected voice. But Nicholas stopped short of actually giving the Duma any power: its role, controversially, was to be purely consultative.

Some reforms were achieved. Health and education systems were put in place and laws were changed so that the peasantry could become landowners if they so chose - half of them did so by 1915. In-fighting between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks continued during this time, with the former positing the idea that they should swap their underground status for a more public relationship with the now-legal trade unions, and the latter, viewing the bourgeois class as having been weakened by recent events, still pushing for a full proletarian overhaul of society.

Then, in 1914, came war, where inflation ran rampant in Russia, crippling taxes were imposed, and the peasantry were reduced to barely surviving at a level of subsistence farming. The Mensheviks largely supported Russia defending itself against Germany. The more radical Bolsheviks, fronted by the vocal Lenin, advocated flipping the situation into a civil war of the Russian proletariat against its own government, which, if successful, would evolve into a revolutionary war across Europe. Again, the Revolution of 1917 would initially see the various political factions scrambling to take ownership rather than leading from the front. General unrest suddenly led to major upheaval. On 23 February/8 March, thousands of female factory workers took to the streets of Saint Petersburg, nominally to mark Women's Day, until the tone shifted into chants demanding bread and mass singing of the French revolutionary anthem *La Marseillaise*. Three days later, rioting in Znamensky Square was met with gunfire from the Znamensky regiment, which caused several other regiments to find their soldiers mutinying in protest. The next day, Saint Petersburg fell to the insurgents, with

“ELECTIONS WERE PROMISED AND THEN POSTPONED, BUT BEFORE THEY COULD HAPPEN THE BOLSHEVIKS SEIZED POWER”

Lenin speaking at the Tauride Palace in 1917

The Provisional Government in Petrograd, 1917

Key Figures

BOLSHEVIKS

Vladimir Lenin

Leader of the Bolsheviks

The revolutionary thinker and politician steered Russia to communist revolution and was its premier from 1917 until his death from a stroke in 1924, aged 53. His body lay in state for four days and was viewed by almost a million mourners.

Leon Trotsky

Chairman of the Revolutionary Committee

Initially a Menshevik, Trotsky joined the Bolsheviks for the 1917 revolution and was instrumental in its success. He was later expelled from the Communist Party and exiled for his opposition to Stalin. He was assassinated in 1940.

Joseph Stalin

Member of the Central Committee

A minor player in the 1917 Revolution, Stalin rose through Bolshevik ranks until he took leadership following Lenin's death. His rule turned Russia into an industrial power, but he was also responsible for the deaths of millions in the Gulags.

PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

Prince Georgy Lvov

Minister President/Minister of the Interior

The first post-imperial prime minister of Russia, Lvov was the first head of the Provisional Government following Nicholas II's abdication. A veteran of the Duma, he failed to garner much support and resigned after just four months in position.

Alexander Kerensky

Minister of Justice/Minister of War and Navy/ Minister President

The Trudovik Kerensky took over the Provisional Government in July 1917. Unpopular with the military, he was deposed by the revolution. He fled and remained in exile until his death in 1970.

Viktor Chernov

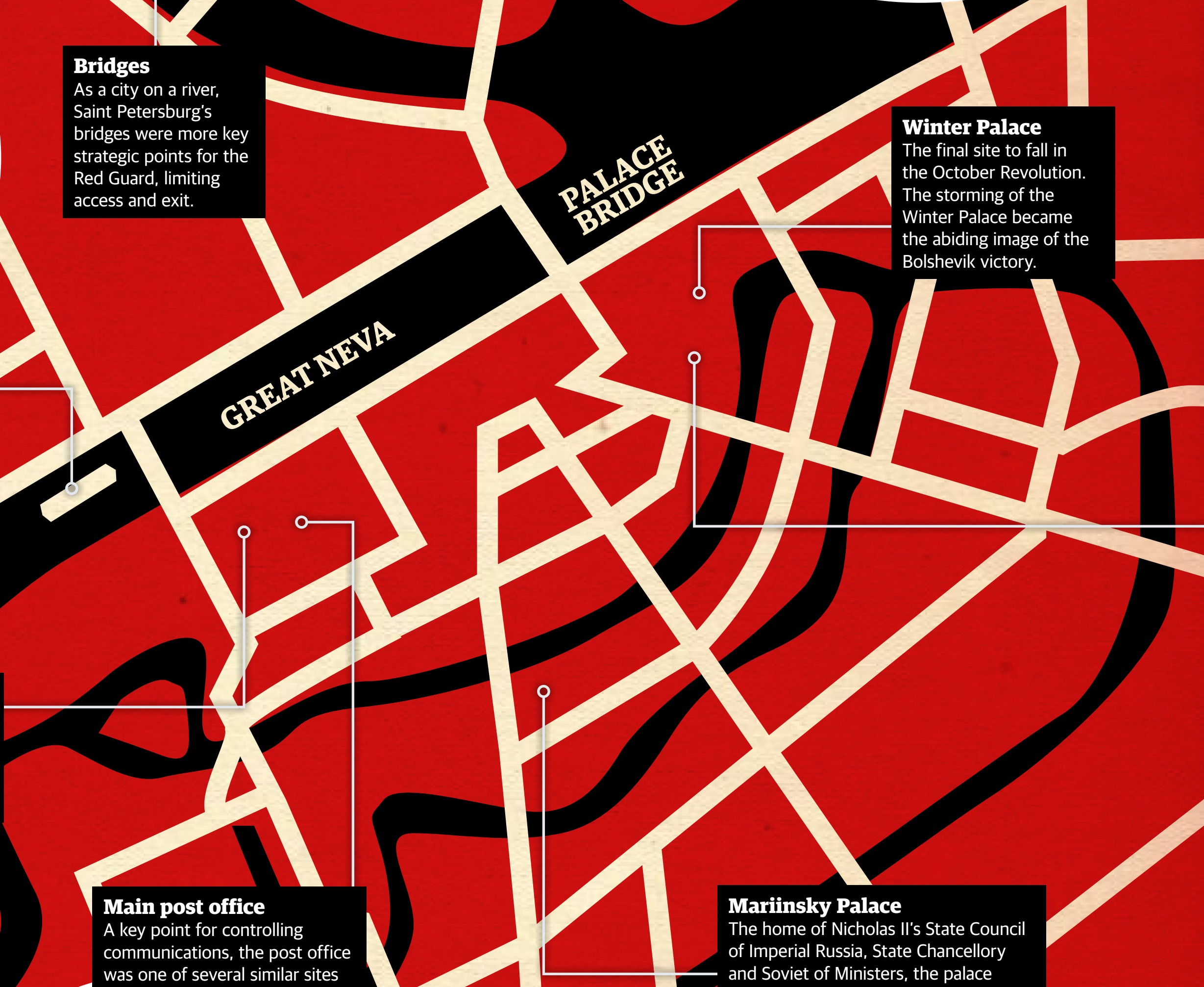
Minister of Agriculture

One of the founding members of the Russian Socialist-Revolutionaries, Chernov was a formidable political analyst – some called him the 'brain' of the party. Following the Bolsheviks' seizure of power he, like Kerensky, fled to Europe.

THE OCTOBER UPRISING

In October 1917, Lenin's Red Guard stormed the streets of Petrograd, taking over several strategic points

The storming of the Winter Palace, recreated for Sergei Eisenstein's *October: Ten Days That Shook the World*



Bridges
As a city on a river, Saint Petersburg's bridges were more key strategic points for the Red Guard, limiting access and exit.

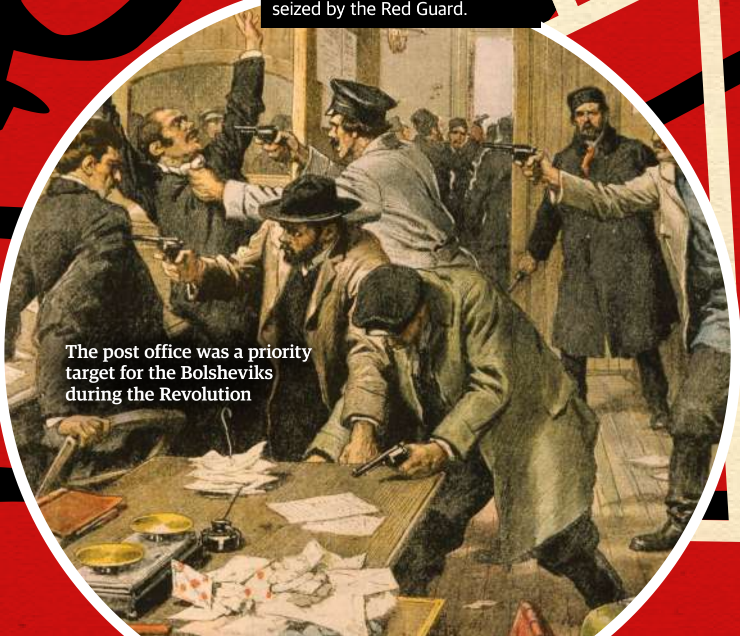
Winter Palace
The final site to fall in the October Revolution. The storming of the Winter Palace became the abiding image of the Bolshevik victory.

Aurora
Anchored on Saint Petersburg's Bolshaya Neva River, the cruiser Aurora was the ship from which the revolutionary troops fired blank shots at the Winter Palace, terrorising the people inside.

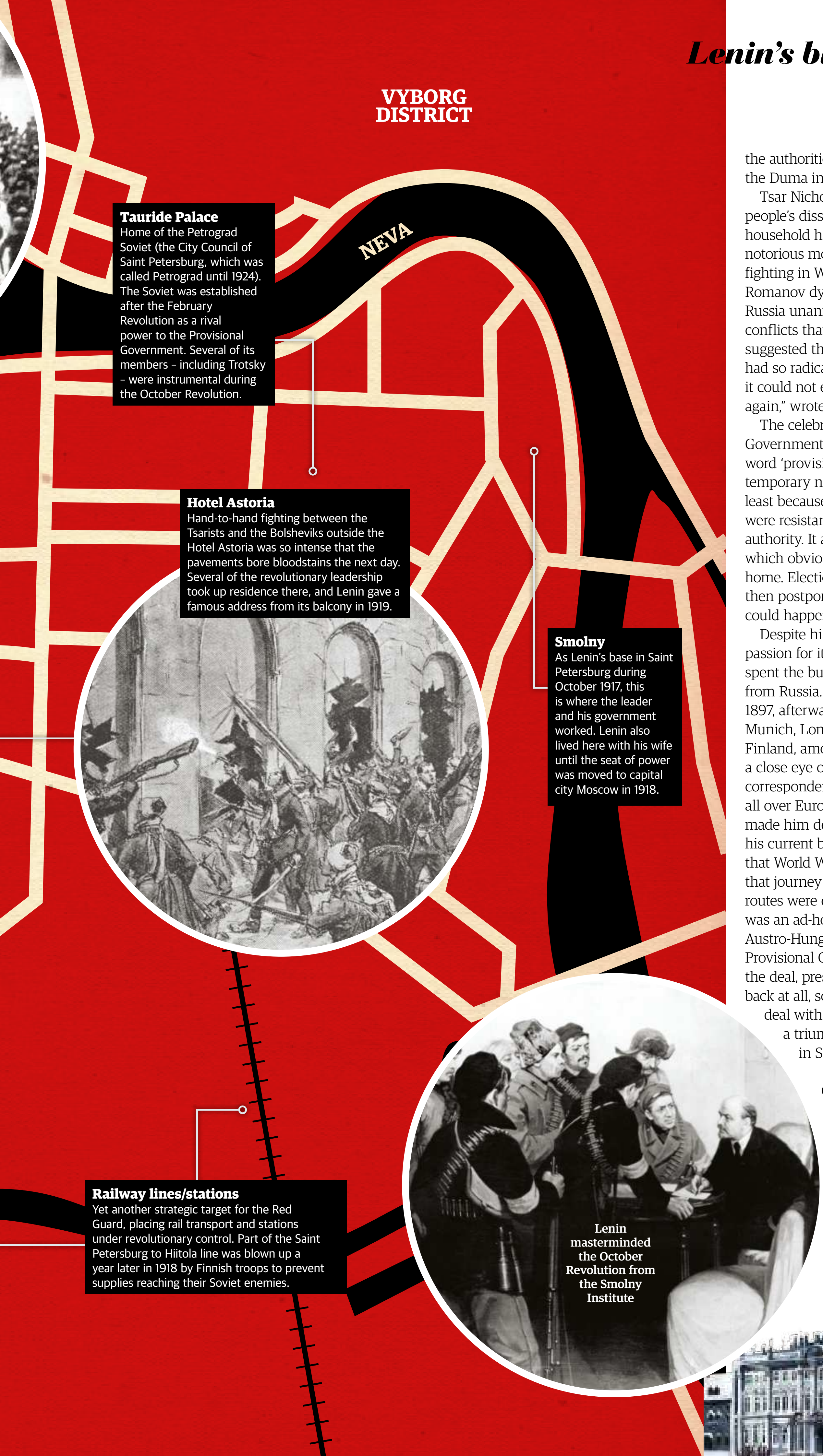
Central Telegraph
Like the post office, control of the Telegraph was of significant use to the Bolsheviks and the Red Guard, cutting off the opposition from any means of summoning help or reinforcement.

Main post office
A key point for controlling communications, the post office was one of several similar sites seized by the Red Guard.

Mariinsky Palace
The home of Nicholas II's State Council of Imperial Russia, State Chancellory and Soviet of Ministers, the palace was given over to the Provisional Government in March 1917, and then to various Soviet ministries after October.



The post office was a priority target for the Bolsheviks during the Revolution



Tauride Palace
Home of the Petrograd Soviet (the City Council of Saint Petersburg, which was called Petrograd until 1924). The Soviet was established after the February Revolution as a rival power to the Provisional Government. Several of its members – including Trotsky – were instrumental during the October Revolution.

Hotel Astoria
Hand-to-hand fighting between the Tsarists and the Bolsheviks outside the Hotel Astoria was so intense that the pavements bore bloodstains the next day. Several of the revolutionary leadership took up residence there, and Lenin gave a famous address from its balcony in 1919.

Smolny
As Lenin's base in Saint Petersburg during October 1917, this is where the leader and his government worked. Lenin also lived here with his wife until the seat of power was moved to capital city Moscow in 1918.

Railway lines/stations
Yet another strategic target for the Red Guard, placing rail transport and stations under revolutionary control. Part of the Saint Petersburg to Hiitola line was blown up a year later in 1918 by Finnish troops to prevent supplies reaching their Soviet enemies.

Lenin masterminded the October Revolution from the Smolny Institute

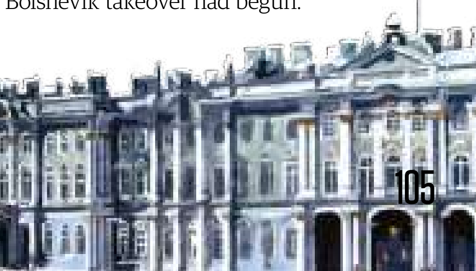
the authorities retreating to the Winter Palace and the Duma in chaos.

Tsar Nicholas, long the figurehead for the people's dissatisfaction – it didn't help that his household had come under the malign influence of notorious monk Rasputin while Nicholas had been fighting in World War I – abdicated, ending the Romanov dynasty with extraordinary suddenness. Russia unanimously rejoiced, and in the civil conflicts that followed, no party or faction even suggested the monarchy's revival. "The country had so radically vomited up the monarchy that it could not ever crawl down the people's throat again," wrote the Social Democrat Leon Trotsky.

The celebrations were short lived. A Provisional Government was formed, but while the very word 'provisional' was intended to make clear its temporary nature, it struggled to keep order: not least because, having not been elected, the people were resistant to the idea that it wielded any authority. It also continued to fight in World War I, which obviously remained an unpopular policy at home. Elections were promised for September and then postponed until November, but before they could happen the Bolsheviks seized power.

Despite his devotion to his homeland and his passion for its political struggles, Lenin had actually spent the bulk of the previous two decades away from Russia. Exiled to Siberia for three years in 1897, afterwards he spent itinerant periods in Munich, London, Paris, Sweden, Switzerland and Finland, among other places, all the time keeping a close eye on events at home and keeping up correspondence with his revolutionary comrades all over Europe. The unrest in February 1917 made him desperate to return to Russia from his current base in Switzerland, but the fact that World War I was raging around him made that journey problematic. Various adventurous routes were discussed, but the eventual solution was an ad-hoc exchange of Russian exiles for Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war. The Russian Provisional Government dragged their heels over the deal, presumably not sure they wanted Lenin back at all, so the impatient communists did the deal with Germany themselves. Lenin arrived to a triumphant reception at the Finland Station in Saint Petersburg in April 1917.

For Lenin, the timing was urgent. Over the next six months he deluged his Bolshevik Central Committee colleagues with arguments in favour of radical immediate action, and in October, the decision to seize power was made, with an alliance of Lenin and former Menshevik Trotsky, now the chairman of the predominantly Bolshevik Petrograd Soviet (meaning 'council'), at its vanguard. The Bolshevik takeover had begun.



SOVIET DECREES

In the seven years following the revolution in 1917, the new government issued dozens of legislative acts. They were known as decrees

Decree on Peace

The document proposing the immediate withdrawal of Russia from World War I: a key Bolshevik policy since before the revolution.

Decree on Land

Again, a central Bolshevik policy made law: private property was to be abolished and landed estates redistributed among the peasantry.

Decree Socialist Homeland Is In Danger!

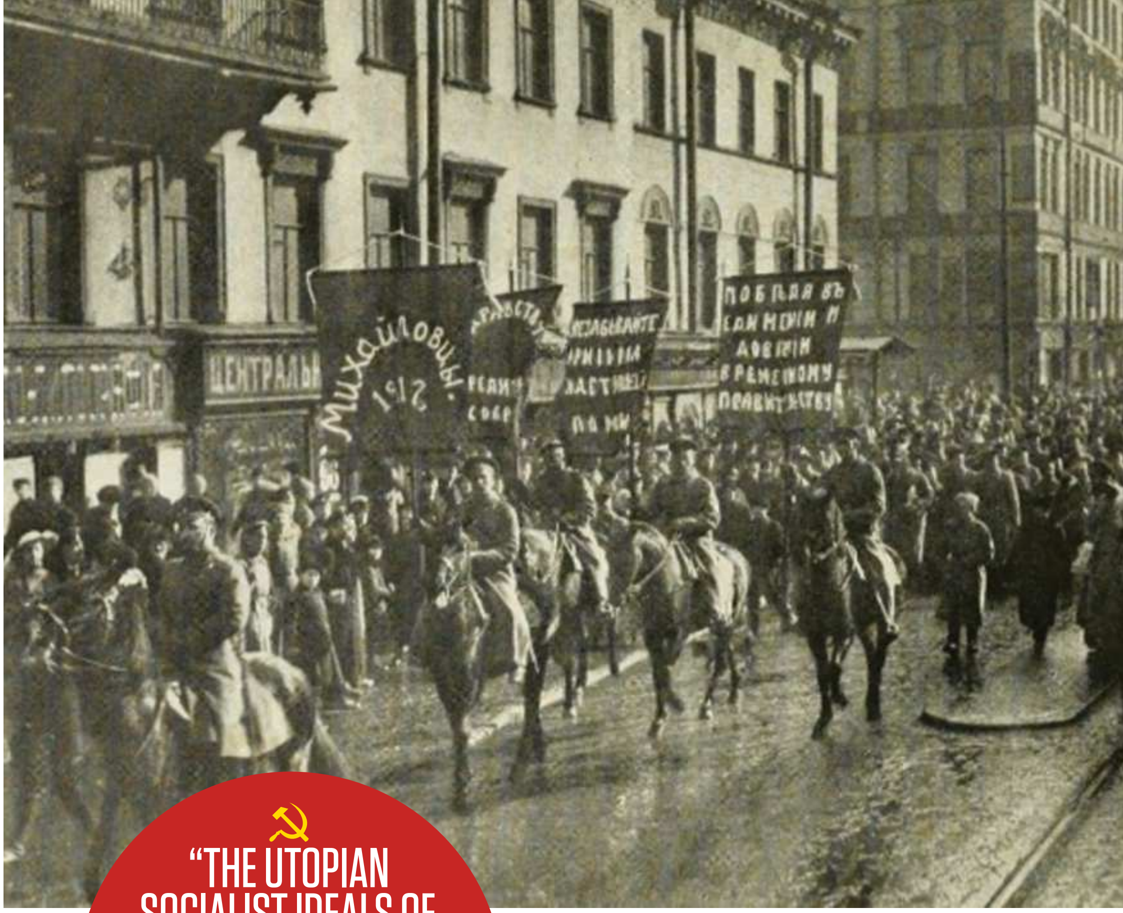
A call for peasant forces to mobilise in Russia's defence in the face of German advances. "Protect each position to the last drop of blood!" was the cry.

Decree on the Red Terror

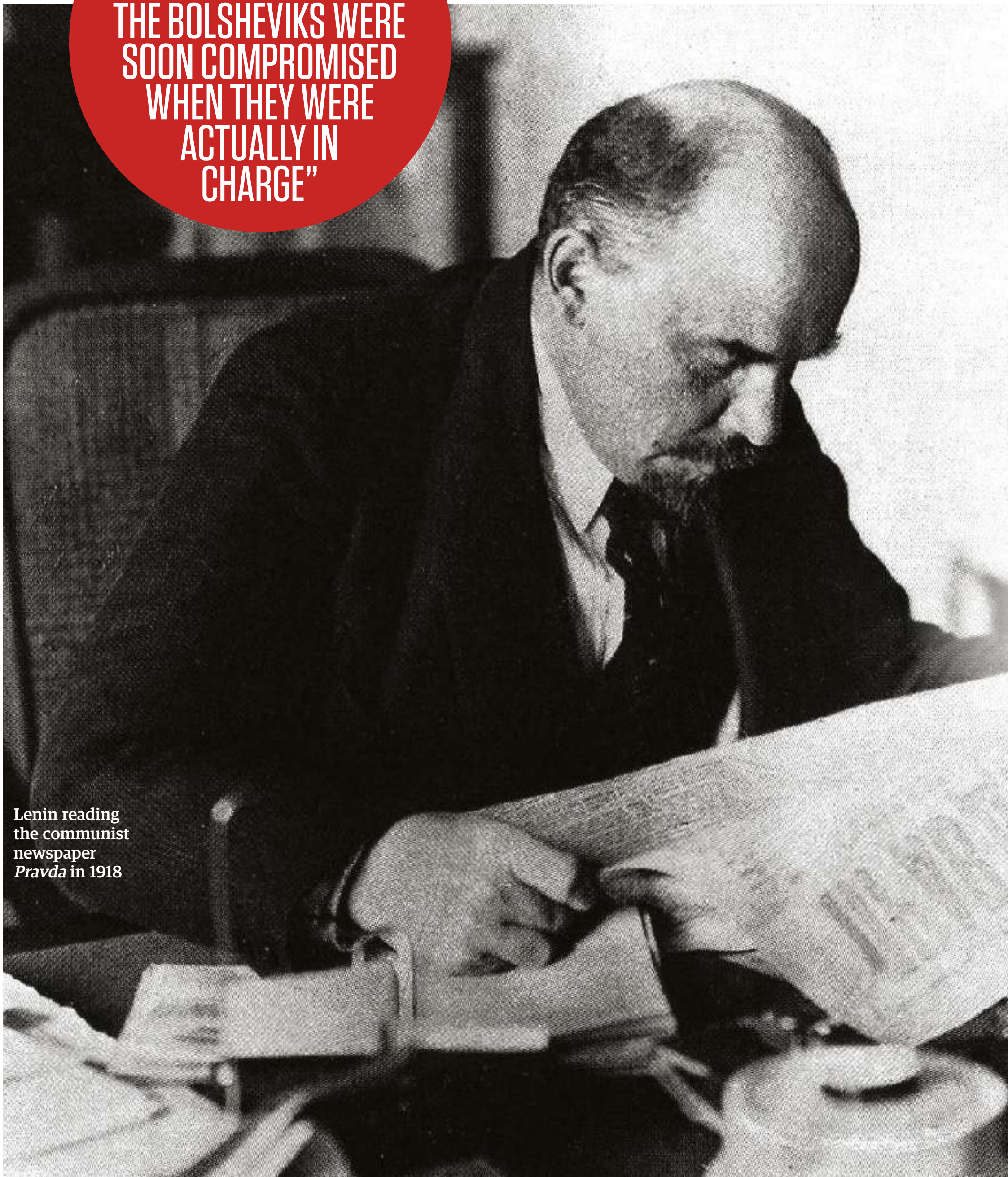
An appeal for workers to crush any signs of counter-revolution against the Bolsheviks. "Anyone who dares to spread the slightest rumour against the Soviet regime will be arrested immediately..."

Decree on the Introduction of Time Measurement According to International Time Zone System

Russia changed from the 'Old Style' Julian Calendar to the 'New Style' Gregorian system of much of the rest of the world in 1918. There's a few days' difference, meaning the October Revolution actually took place in November.



"THE UTOPIAN SOCIALIST IDEALS OF THE BOLSHEVIKS WERE SOON COMPROMISED WHEN THEY WERE ACTUALLY IN CHARGE"

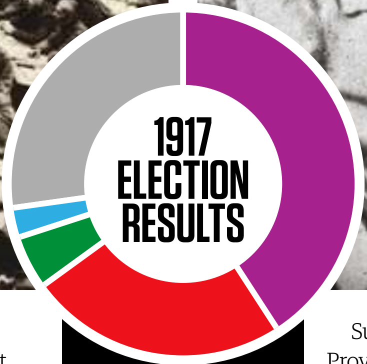


Lenin reading the communist newspaper *Pravda* in 1918

Совѣтъ Солдатскихъ Депутатовъ въ Государственной Думѣ.

A session of the Petrograd Soviet in 1917

Nicholas II, not long after his abdication in 1917



Socialist-Revolutionary Party
Percentage: 41
Number of seats: 380

Bolsheviks
Percentage: 24
Number of seats: 168

Constitutional Democratic Party
Percentage: 5
Number of seats: 17

Mensheviks
Percentage: 3
Seats: 18

Others
Percentage: 27
Number of seats: 120

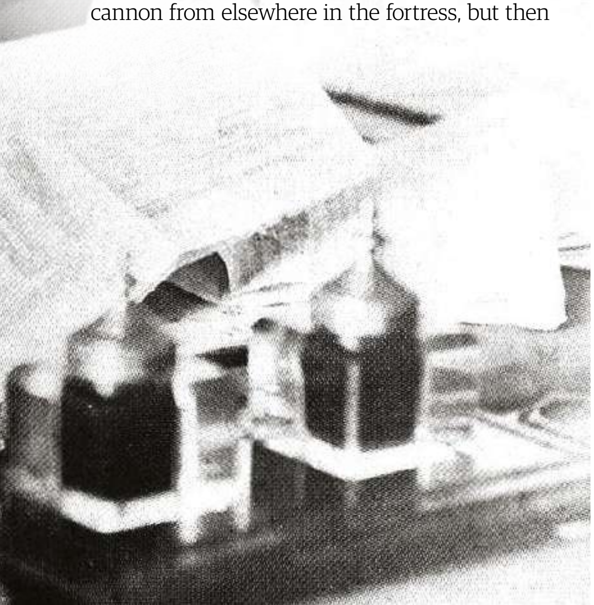
When the Provisional Government, led by the moderate-socialist Alexander Kerensky, ordered the shutting down of the Bolshevik printing presses as a prelude to an attack on the Petrograd Military Revolutionary Committee, the Bolsheviks' armed bands of proletariat workers, known as the Red Guard, retailiated by storming strategic points such as bridges, railway stations, telephone exchanges, post offices, the national bank and the Tauride Palace. Kerensky fled, having been unable to muster counter-troops in time. By the morning, the only site that hadn't fallen to the revolutionaries was the Winter Palace, the headquarters of the Provisional Government.

The 'Storming of the Winter Palace' has gone down as a famously dramatic moment in history, but it was actually a much more scrappy affair than portrayals like Sergei Eisenstein's classic film *October: Ten Days That Shook the World* have suggested. The revolutionary military had planned to begin the assault using heavy artillery from the nearby Peter and Paul Fortress, but the weapons there were rusty from disuse and wouldn't function. Soldiers brought up replacement cannon from elsewhere in the fortress, but then realised they didn't have the right shells to fire. The signal to attack, it had been agreed, would come from a red lantern raised on a flagpole, but during the event, a red lantern couldn't be found, and the soldier sent to look for one got lost in the dark and fell into a bog. The lamp he eventually brought back couldn't be attached to the pole and wasn't red anyway. Nobody that eventually participated in the attack even saw it. The chaos dragged the Winter Palace's downfall out to a tortuous 15 hours, when a more organised force could probably have achieved it in far less time.

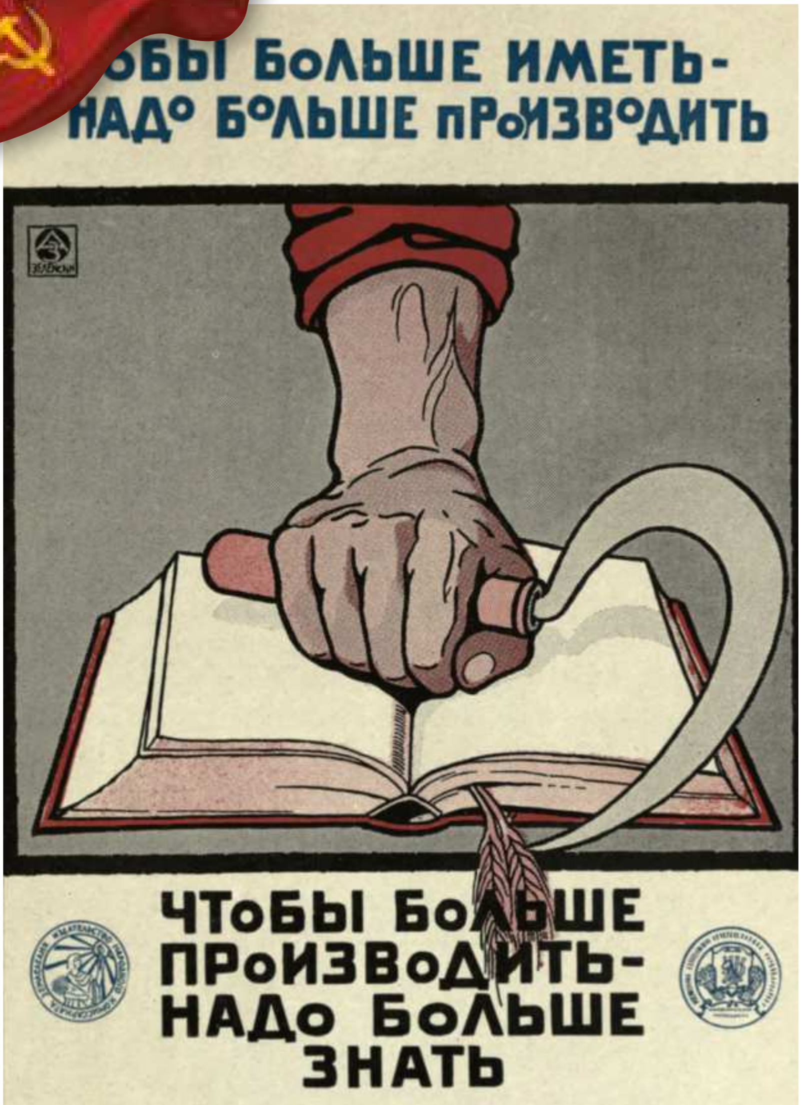
Luckily for the Bolshevik forces, the defence from within the Winter Palace was practically non-existent. The ministers inside were inexperienced in military matters, and the small number of troops defending them were becoming increasingly nervous the longer they waited for the Bolsheviks to breach the doors. Ammunition and food supplies for even a single evening were desperately low, and when the Bolsheviks began firing blank shots at the palace from the cruiser Aurora anchored on the Bolshaya Neva River, the soldiers mostly panicked and fled. Lenin appeared in public for the first time in months to proclaim that the Provisional Government had been overthrown, and that the time had finally come to "set about building a proletarian socialist state." The Bolshevik position was strengthened even further when the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries walked out of the resultant talks, leaving Lenin and his comrades basically unopposed. "You are miserable bankrupts. You have played out your role," Trotsky said to those departing. "Go where you belong, into the dustbin of history."

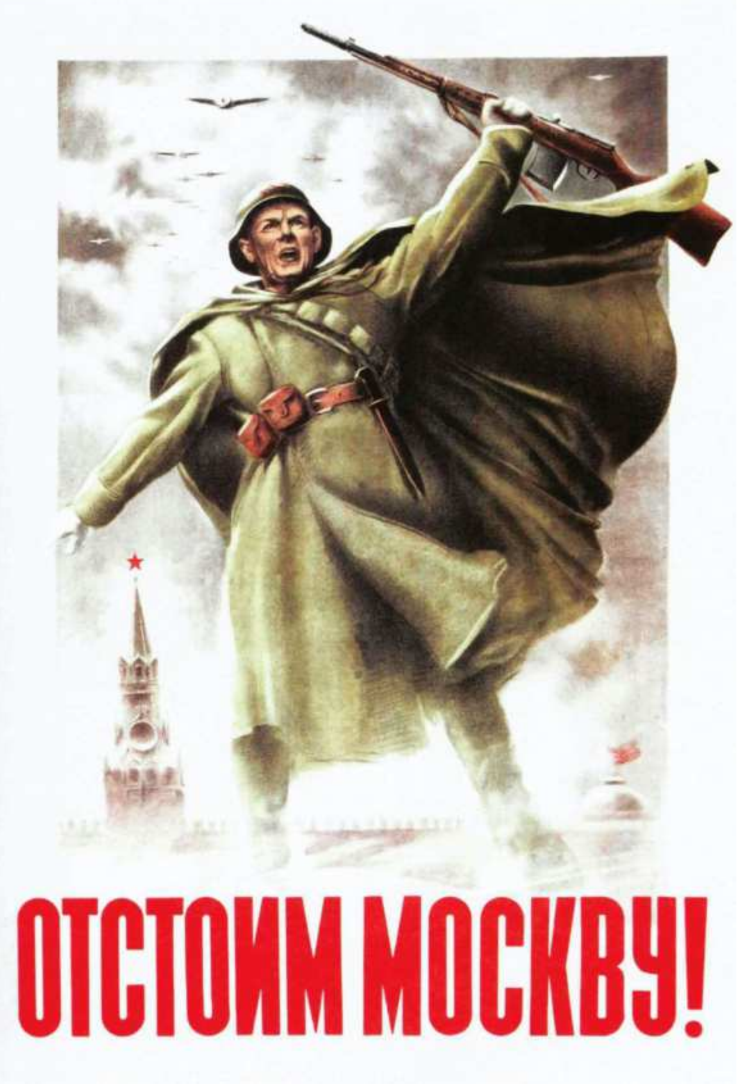
Such had been the state of the Provisional Government that, as one commentator put it, the Bolsheviks did not so much seize power as pick it up from where it had been dropped. The revolution has been called a coup in some circles, but the word 'coup' implies taking power from a strong opponent, where the power that the Provisional Government actually wielded was debatable. Essentially, there had been nobody actually 'running' Russia for the months since the abdication of the Tsar.

Sadly, however, the utopian socialist ideals of the Bolsheviks were soon compromised when they were actually in charge, with Lenin forced into compromises like the crippling Brest-Litovsk peace treaty with Germany, which lost Russia several of its provinces and deprived it of vast swathes of its agricultural and industrial resources. The Bolshevik ideology proved largely unworkable simply due to the practicalities of governance. Lenin ended up replacing one monolithic state with a different one, overruling the 'free' elections of November 1917 (in which the Socialist-Revolutionary Party won a significant majority of the votes) and announcing "the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" so that the Bolsheviks walked away with power anyway. Factional splits and civil war followed, as did the continuing oppression of the proletariat that Bolshevism had sought to liberate, the catastrophic famine of the 1930s and the horrific regime of the former Bolshevik Joseph Stalin. The flurry of ideas that had led to the Revolution had been, and for many is still, inspirational. The tragedy remains that the revolutionaries failed to live up to their own ideology.

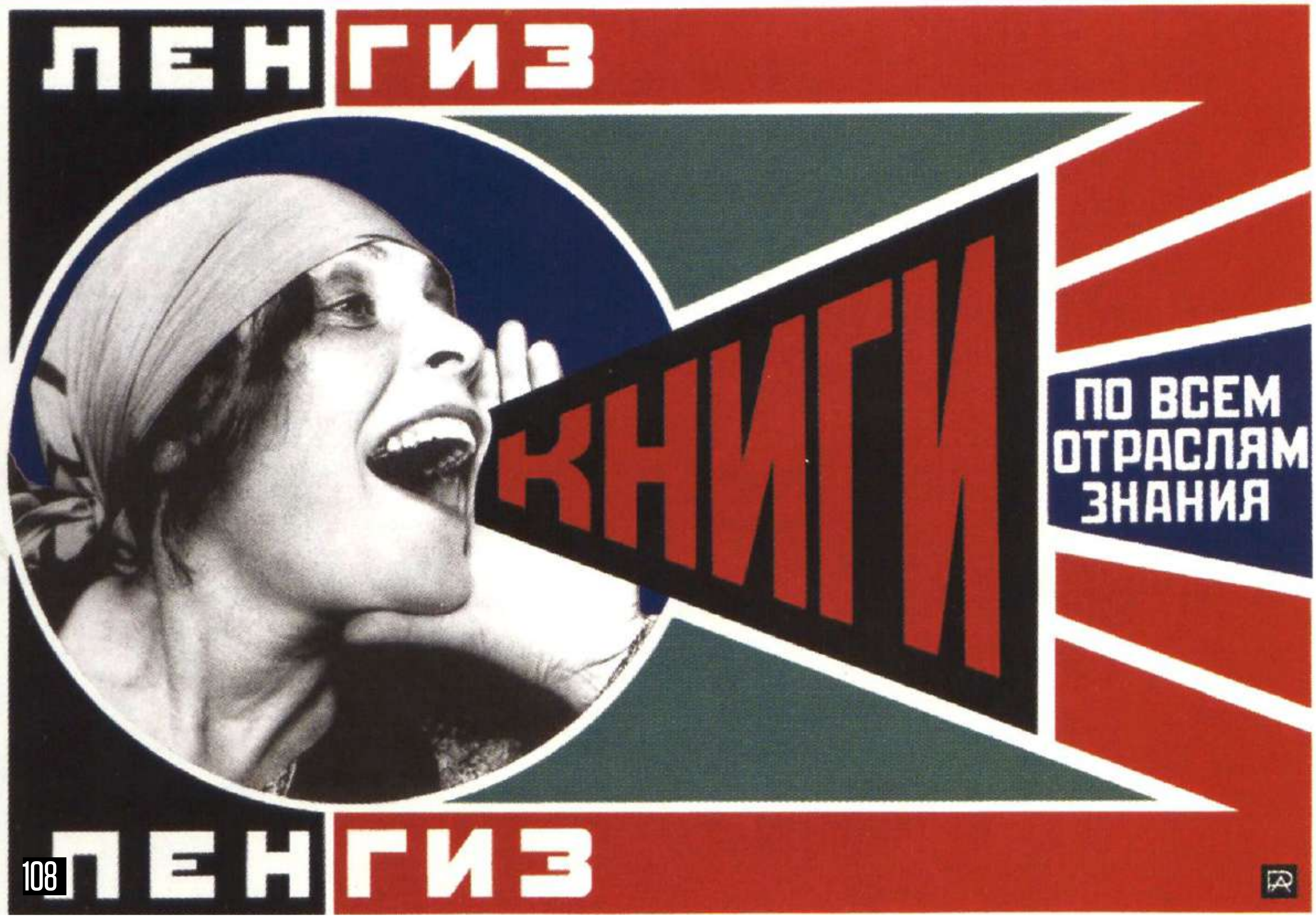


© Joe Cummings; Alamy; Rex Features


ОБЫ БОЛЬШЕ ИМЕТЬ-
НАДО БОЛЬШЕ ПРОИЗВОДИТЬ
ЧТОБЫ БОЛЬШЕ
ПРОИЗВОДИТЬ-
НАДО БОЛЬШЕ
ЗНАТЬ


ОТСТОИМ МОСКВУ!

ПРОЛЕТАРИ


ЛЕНГИЗ
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ПО ВСЕМ
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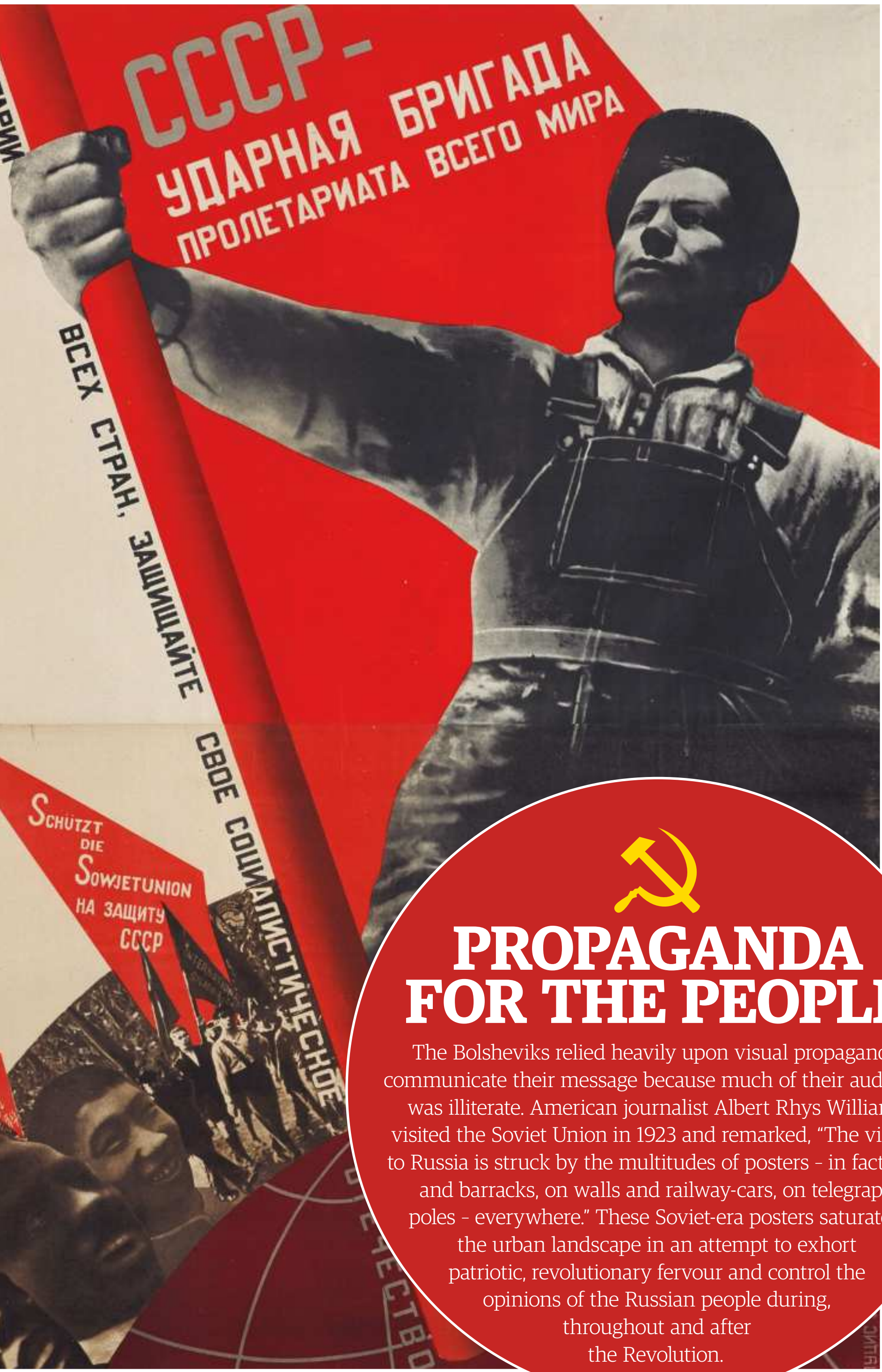
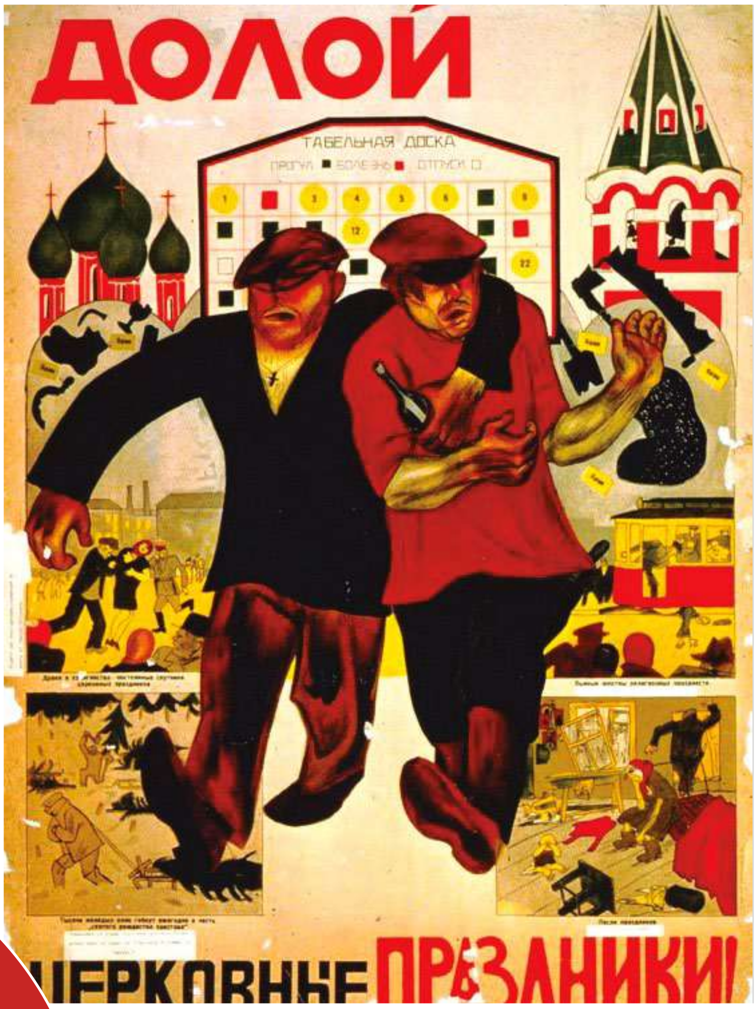
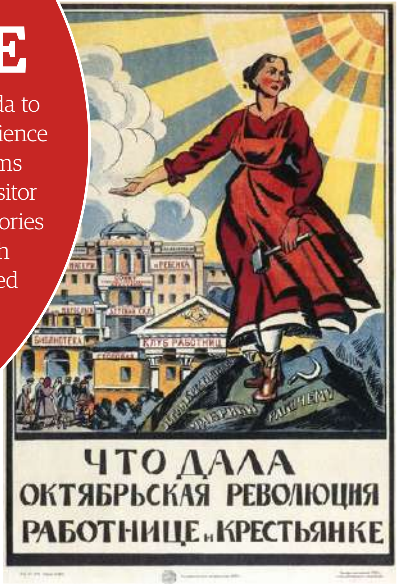
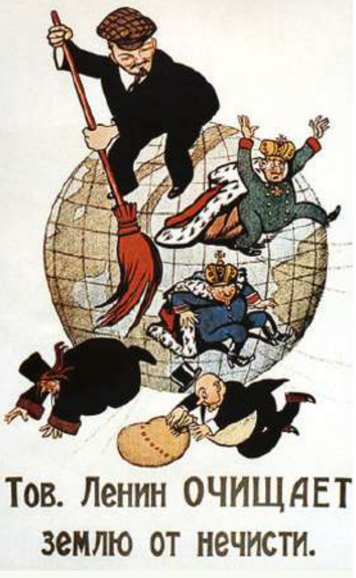

СССР -
УДАРНАЯ БРИГАДА
ПРОЛЕТАРИАТА ВСЕГО МИРА
ВСЕХ СТРАН, ЗАЩИЩАЙТЕ СВОЕ СОЦИАЛИСТИЧЕСКОЕ
Schützt die Sowjetunion
НА ЗАЩИТУ СССР

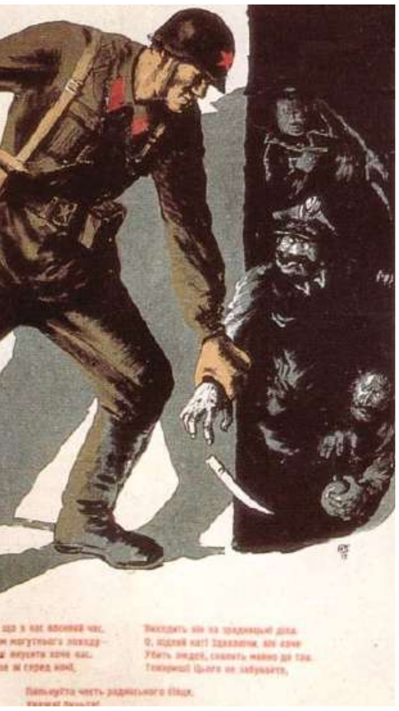

ДОЛОЙ
ТАБЕЛЬНАЯ ДОСКА
ЦЕРКОВНЫЕ ПРАЗДНИКИ!

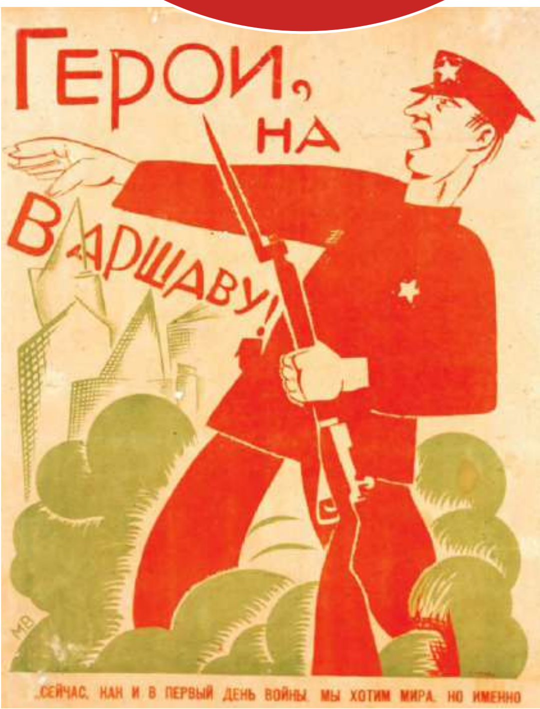
PROPAGANDA FOR THE PEOPLE

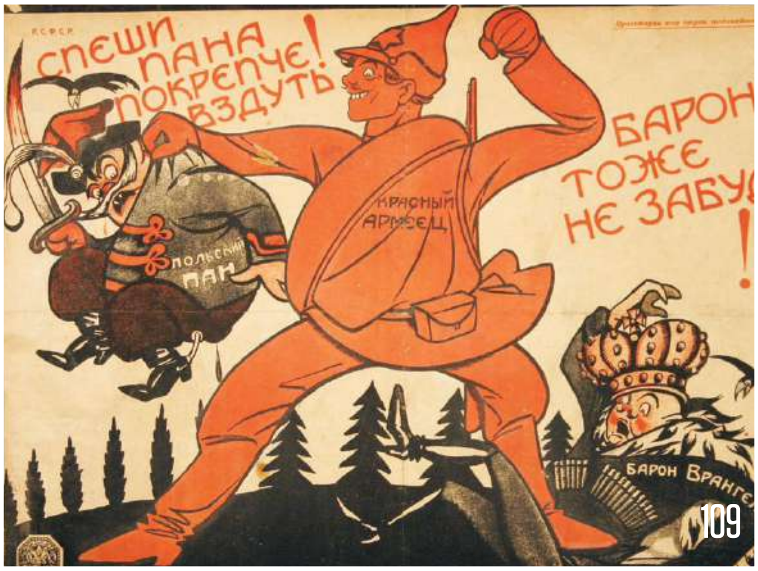
The Bolsheviks relied heavily upon visual propaganda to communicate their message because much of their audience was illiterate. American journalist Albert Rhys Williams visited the Soviet Union in 1923 and remarked, "The visitor to Russia is struck by the multitudes of posters - in factories and barracks, on walls and railway-cars, on telegraph poles - everywhere." These Soviet-era posters saturated the urban landscape in an attempt to exhort patriotic, revolutionary fervour and control the opinions of the Russian people during, throughout and after the Revolution.


БИБЛИОТЕКА
КЛУБ РАБОТНИЦ
ЧТО ДАЛА
ОКТЯБРЬСКАЯ РЕВОЛЮЦИЯ
РАБОТНИЦЕ и КРЕСТЬЯНКЕ


Тов. Ленин ОЧИЩАЕТ
землю от нечисти.




Герои,
на
Варшаву!
СЕЙЧАС, КАК И В ПЕРВЫЙ ДЕНЬ ВОЙНЫ, МЫ ХОТИМ МИРА. НО ИМЕННО


РСФСР
спеши пана покрепче вздуть!
БАРОН ТОЖЕ НЕ ЗАБУ
!
КРАСНЫЙ АРМЕЕЦ
ПОЛЬСКИЙ ПАН
БАРОН ВРАНГЕ

The House of Special Purpose

As revolution engulfed Russia, one of the most pressing concerns of the new leaders was the fate of the abdicated Tsar and his family

The Romanov family. From left to right, Olga, Maria, Nicholas II, Alexandra, Anastasia, Alexei and Tatiana

When the exhausted and humiliated former Tsar Nicholas II arrived back at Tsarskoye Selo, he found his family subdued and anxious about the future. His five children, Olga, Tatiana, Maria, Anastasia and Alexei, were all recovering from a bout of measles, which had left Maria desperately ill, while his wife, Alexandra, who was prone to depression, was in extremely low spirits. The family had been shocked by the news of Nicholas' abdication but overall their main concern was for his wellbeing.

It was clear from the outset that the Romanovs would not be able to remain in Russia but no one knew what else to do with them. Nicholas and Alexandra, who were both first cousins of Britain's King George V and had spent much time in the country, had naturally assumed that they would be able to call upon George for help and shelter. However, progress was slow as the British establishment and Russian Provisional Government failed to agree on the details.

In the meantime, the Romanovs remained under close guard in Alexander Palace, which was their favourite residence but seemed much less appealing now that it was effectively their prison. Despite their understandable apprehension, they tried to make the best of things – the children had their lessons and played in the parts of the grounds still available to them while their father busied himself clearing snow from the palace terraces and planting vegetables.

As his wife was believed to have a malign influence over him, the couple were initially allowed to meet only at mealtimes, but this rule was eventually relaxed. At first, the guards assigned to them were relatively respectful but they quickly began to treat the family with casual contempt and deliberate rudeness, underlining the fact that it was the ordinary Russian people who now held the upper hand in everything.

Alexander Kerensky, the head of the Provisional Government, was keen to see the Romanovs leave Russia for good and found the debate about their fate an irritating distraction from the far more important task of bringing order back to the country. He initially hoped to send them abroad but when hopes of this possibility began to fade, he began to consider alternative plans.

At the end of July, after almost five months of captivity, the family was informed that it would be leaving Tsarskoye Selo and that it was time to pack.

> "They did their best to continue living normally with the children"

Any lingering hopes that they might end up in England or their summer palace in the Crimea faded when they were instructed to pack clothes that were suitable for a cold climate and that their journey would take five days – which Nicholas worked out was roughly the amount of time that it would take to reach Siberia.

The Romanovs left Tsarskoye Selo for the last time in August 1917, accompanied by several faithful retainers and a vast amount of luggage, including furs, priceless jewels, religious icons and dozens of albums full of photographs of the family in happier times. It was only when they were on the train that they were informed they would be travelling to Tobolsk, where they would be housed in the faded grandeur of the former Governor's Mansion, the previous residents having been hastily evicted to make way for them.

In Tobolsk, the family were comfortably housed and even enjoyed some luxuries, but found their freedom increasingly restricted as the months passed. Nevertheless, they did their best to live normally with the children, continuing their lessons and spending as much time outside as possible. They had even been permitted to bring along their precious cameras and the photographs taken at this time remain a poignant reminder of their last months alive. The markedly affectionate family clearly relished this opportunity to spend time together in such close quarters, while Nicholas, who had never enjoyed the heavy responsibilities of his rank, was more relaxed than he had been in a long time.

While the cheerful diary entries and letters of the Romanovs suggest that the family were not entirely unhappy with their forced sojourn in

Why didn't George V help the Romanovs?

The UK could have been their safe haven but the British wouldn't harbour them

When Nicholas II abdicated his throne in March 1917, it was naturally assumed in many quarters that he and his family would seek refuge with their relatives in England. Nicholas' mother, Maria Feodorovna, was the sister of George V's mother, Alexandra of Denmark, while the Tsarina was also a first cousin to the British king and, furthermore, had been a favourite granddaughter of Queen Victoria.

Both had spent considerable time in Britain over the years and even privately spoke English between themselves and with their children. As far as Kerensky and the Russian Provisional Government were concerned, it would have been a perfect solution to the problem and at first, George V and his government seemed to agree – even going so far as to issue an invitation for the Romanovs to come to them.

However, when the invitation became public knowledge in Britain, it provoked protests both in parliament and the press, where Nicholas was denounced as a despotic tyrant with the blood of millions upon his hands and the epitome of an autocratic style of monarchy that had no place in modern society. Although George was extremely fond of his cousins, the safety of his own family and stability of his throne was of paramount importance to him and he was forced to concede that the presence of Nicholas in Britain would pose a considerable threat to both and consequently withdraw the invitation, consigning his cousins to their fate. He would regret this decision for the rest of his life.

Despite the many privations that they suffered during their imprisonment, the Romanov family managed to find some happiness during their time in Tobolsk

"Demands for Nicholas to face trial in Moscow were increasing and seemed about to be satisfied"

Siberia, they were nonetheless worried about the rapidly worsening situation elsewhere in Russia. Of particular concern was the forcible overthrow of Kerensky and his government by the Bolsheviks in October 1917, which would have fatal consequences for the former imperial family.

While the family had enjoyed some measure of protection and personal liberty under Kerensky's auspices, even occasionally being allowed to attend church in Tobolsk, their situation would become progressively more unpleasant after Lenin seized power. Their new Bolshevik guards went out of

Defining moment

Departure from Saint Petersburg

19 July/1 August 1917

Although the family had hoped to be taken either to England or their palace in the Crimea, they were dismayed to learn that they were instead to be taken to Siberia. After several hours of delays and tedious waiting around, they finally left in the early hours of the morning, accompanied by a few faithful retainers and many personal possessions. Crowds gathered at Tsarskoye Selo train station to see them leave for the last time. It was only once they were on the train that they were informed of their destination.

The end of the Romanovs

1917

The Tsar's return
Defeated and humiliated after his abdication, Nicholas returned to Alexander Palace in Tsarskoye Selo, where he was reunited with his family, who had been placed under close guard in their apartments.
9/22 March 1917

1917

Arrival in Tobolsk
After travelling for five days, the family arrived in Tobolsk, where they were comfortably housed in the mansion residence of the governor. Here, they enjoyed some luxuries and even a small measure of relative freedom.
24 July/6 August 1917

1917

Overthrow of Kerensky
The relatively lenient way in which the family had been treated came to an end when Kerensky's government was overthrown by the Bolsheviks during the October Revolution.
26 October/7 November 1917

1918

Leaving Tobolsk
Amid calls to bring Nicholas to trial and punish him for the mistakes of his reign, the former Tsar, his wife and their daughter Maria were forced to leave Tobolsk. The four other children followed them later.
26 April 1918

their way to make the family feel uncomfortable and unsafe; their movements were increasingly restricted. In March 1918, they were placed on soldier's rations, meaning that they could no longer support most of their household and were forced to give up many luxuries.

Meanwhile, demands for Nicholas to face trial in Moscow were increasing and seemed about to be satisfied when commissioner Vasily Yakovlev arrived with orders to move him to an unspecified destination that was assumed to be Moscow. In April, Nicholas, Alexandra and their daughter Maria left Tobolsk, leaving behind the other three girls and Alexei, who was too ill to travel.

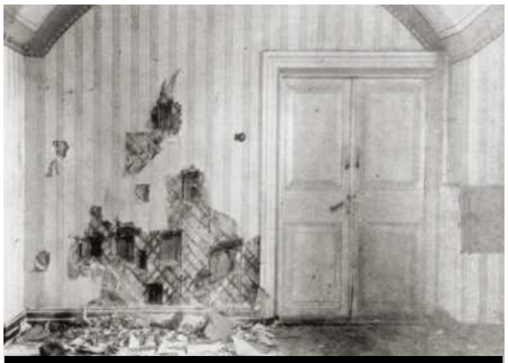
However, despite Yakovlev's attempts to prevent the family falling into the hands of the hard-line Bolshevik Ural Regional Soviet, the convoy ended up in Ekaterinburg, in the Urals. They were taken to the Ipatiev House, which was hastily renamed the 'House of Special Purpose' and was much less congenial than the mansion in Tobolsk. The rest of the children and their few remaining servants followed in May.

Life in Ekaterinburg was very different to that in Tobolsk. For the first time, the family, surrounded by hostile, thieving guards and isolated from the outside world, truly felt themselves to be in danger. Their apprehension increased with the arrival of a strict new commandant, Yakov Yurovsky, under whose regime their imprisonment became increasingly unpleasant. Some hope was offered by a series of letters from an anonymous supporter who offered to rescue them but the family's naïvely unwise responses would seal their fate, as they were fabrications cynically designed to justify the plans being made for their murder.

Yurovsky had been given orders at the start of July to execute the family. He spent the next fortnight working out the logistics before putting his plan into action in the early hours of 17 July, when the Romanovs and their four servants were woken and taken to the basement. The plan was to shoot them all as efficiently as possible but most of the killers were drunk and it quickly descended into chaos. The family was effectively butchered before their remains were transported to the countryside, crudely mutilated and buried.

In an attempt to misdirect anyone looking for the bodies, Yurovsky ordered that the corpses of Alexei and one of his sisters, now believed to be Maria, should be burned and buried separately elsewhere, which later fuelled rumours that one of the Romanov sisters might have escaped the massacre. Later that month, the White Army entered Ekaterinburg and set up the Sokolov Commission, named for the chief investigator Nikolai Sokolov, to investigate the Romanovs' disappearance and presumed murder.

Although Sokolov uncovered much significant evidence of the Romanov family's brutal fate and would eventually publish a preliminary report that named Yurovsky as the chief architect of the murders, the strenuous efforts of Lenin and his successors to hide the truth about the shameful events of 17 July 1918 meant that the full facts of the case would not be known for almost 90 years.


When the White Army arrived in Ekaterinburg, it found the basement of the Ipatiev House stained with blood

Did Lenin order the executions?

Although it is clear that the Ekaterinburg Bolsheviks had been determined from the outset to be the ones to bring Nicholas to justice and execute the Romanov family, they still hesitated to take action until they had received permission from Lenin. To this end, they sent Filipp Goloshchyokin to Moscow to meet with the Bolshevik leaders at the start of July. However, Goloshchyokin found Lenin unenthusiastic about their plans, as he was planning to have Nicholas publicly tried for his crimes against the Russian people at the end of the month. In the end, the best he could achieve was a non-committal agreement that the Ural Bolsheviks could go ahead on condition that they obtained permission from Moscow first and made no mention of Lenin's involvement.

Yurovsky would later claim that a coded message asking permission for the executions to go ahead was sent to Lenin at 6pm on 16 July and that a coded response was received at Ekaterinburg an hour later, giving the Bolsheviks the official go-ahead. However, no evidence remains of this in any of the official files, so it is still impossible to say with any certainty that Lenin was aware of the murders. But although the Ekaterinburg Bolsheviks were enthusiastic enough about their plan to proceed anyway, it seems unlikely that they would have done so without official permission from Moscow.

Defining moment

Arrival in Ekaterinburg

30 April 1918

Nicholas, Alexandra and Maria arrived in Ekaterinburg and were taken to the Ipatiev House, where they were separated from most of their entourage, closely confined and surrounded by hostile guards supplied by the local, fiercely anti-royalist Bolsheviks. They had their money and most of their belongings confiscated and were forbidden to communicate in any way with the outside world or read newspapers. The other four children joined them on 23 May and despite their enforced isolation, poor treatment and apprehension about the future, the family was overjoyed to be reunited.

1918

Decision to kill
The Ural Regional Soviet decided that Nicholas and his entire family must be executed and so despatched a representative to Lenin in Moscow in order to have their plan officially sanctioned by him.
29 June 1918

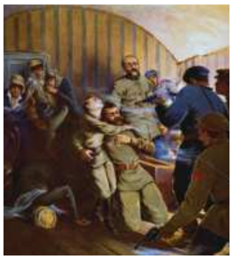
1918

Yurovsky takes charge
The already restrictive and unpleasant regime at the Ipatiev House became steadily worse when the new commandant Yakov Yurovsky, a staunch Bolshevik, arrived to take charge.
4 July 1918

Defining moment

Execution 17 July 1918

The Romanovs were woken in the early hours and informed that they were to be evacuated from Ekaterinburg. They were escorted to a small basement room, followed by Yurovsky and his specially selected firing squad. Nicholas was killed first, followed by his wife, who was shot in the head. The rest of the household was then savagely shot, bayoneted and clubbed to death. It was supposed to be a quick and efficient execution but it quickly turned into a brutal, prolonged massacre.



Disposal of the remains
The disposal of the Romanovs' remains was as chaotic and haphazard as their murder. It involved four different burial sites and a prolonged and hideous attempt to prevent identification with the use of fire and acid.
19 July 1918

1918

White Army arrives
When the White Army seized Ekaterinburg, they immediately tried to discover the fate and whereabouts of the missing Romanov family. Nikolai Sokolov was put in charge of the investigation and uncovered a sadly gruesome tale.
26 July 1918

1918

1981

Canonisation
Nicholas, Alexandra and their five children were canonised as new martyrs by the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. Their canonisation as passion bearers by the Moscow Patriarchate followed on 20 August 2000.
1 November 1981

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The lasting effect that the Revolution had on the remnants of the royal family and on Russia's communist rebirth

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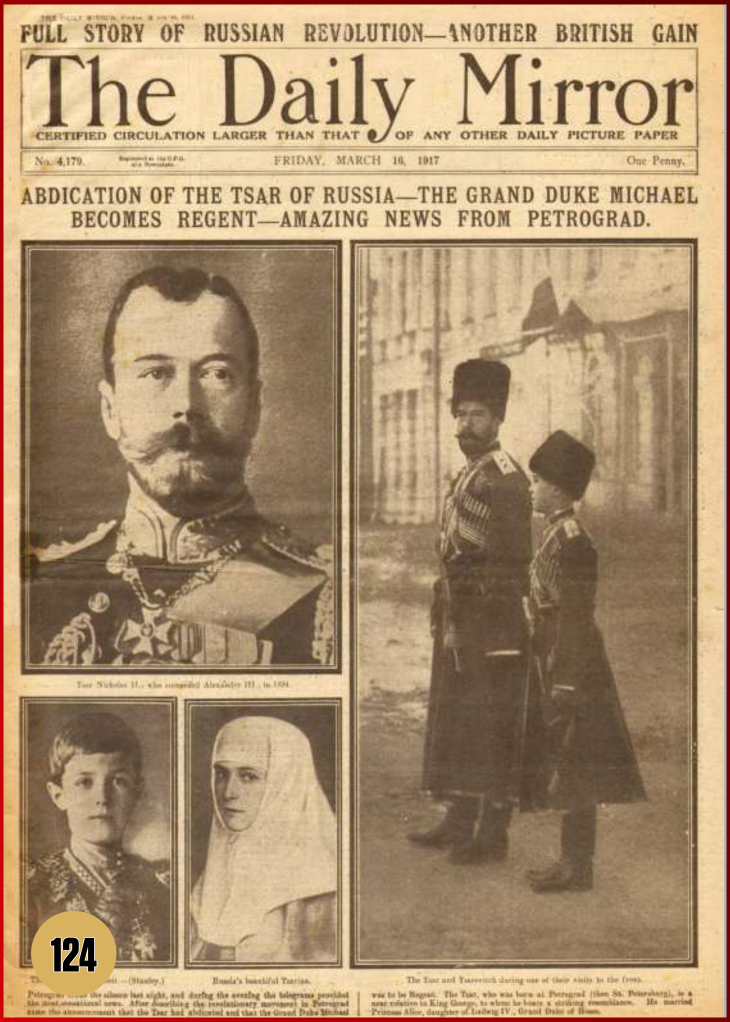

FULL STORY OF RUSSIAN REVOLUTION—ANOTHER BRITISH GAIN

The Daily Mirror

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No. 4,179. Registered at the G.P.O. as a Newspaper. FRIDAY, MARCH 16, 1917 One Penny.

ABDICATION OF THE TSAR OF RUSSIA—THE GRAND DUKE MICHAEL BECOMES REGENT—AMAZING NEWS FROM PETROGRAD.

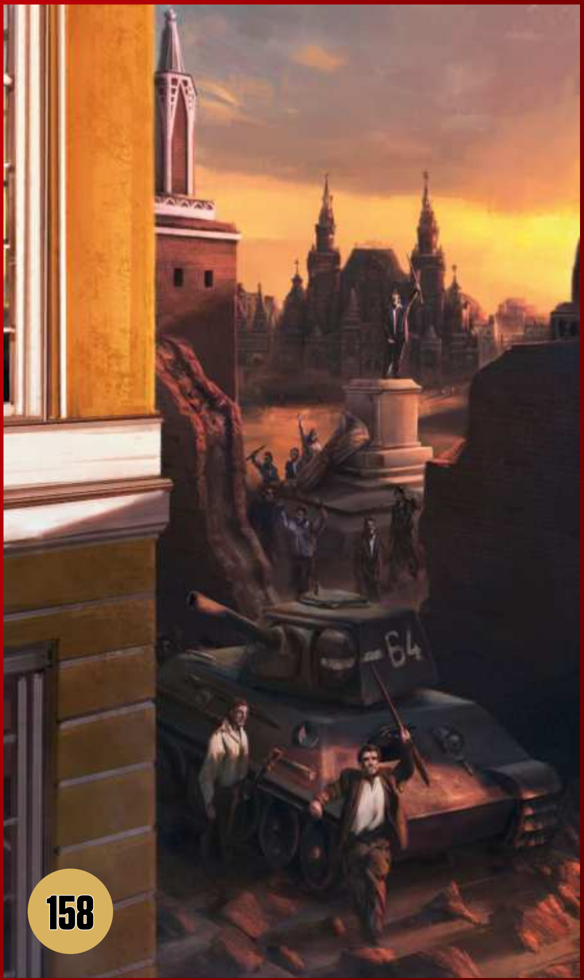
Tsar Nicholas II., who succeeded Alexander III., in 1894.

Th [illegible] —(Stanley.)

Russia's beautiful Tsarina.

The Tsar and Tsarevitch during one of their visits to the front.

Petrograd [illegible] the silence last night, and during the evening the telegrams provided the most sensational news. After describing the revolutionary movement in Petrograd came the announcement that the Tsar had abdicated and that the Grand Duke Michael was to be Regent. The Tsar, who was born at Petrograd (then St. Petersburg), is a near relative to King George, to whom he bears a striking resemblance. He married Princess Alice, daughter of Ludwig IV., Grand Duke of Hesse.



The mystery of Anastasia

As rumours of the youngest Grand Duchess' survival flourished, one woman's incredible claim catapulted her to fame

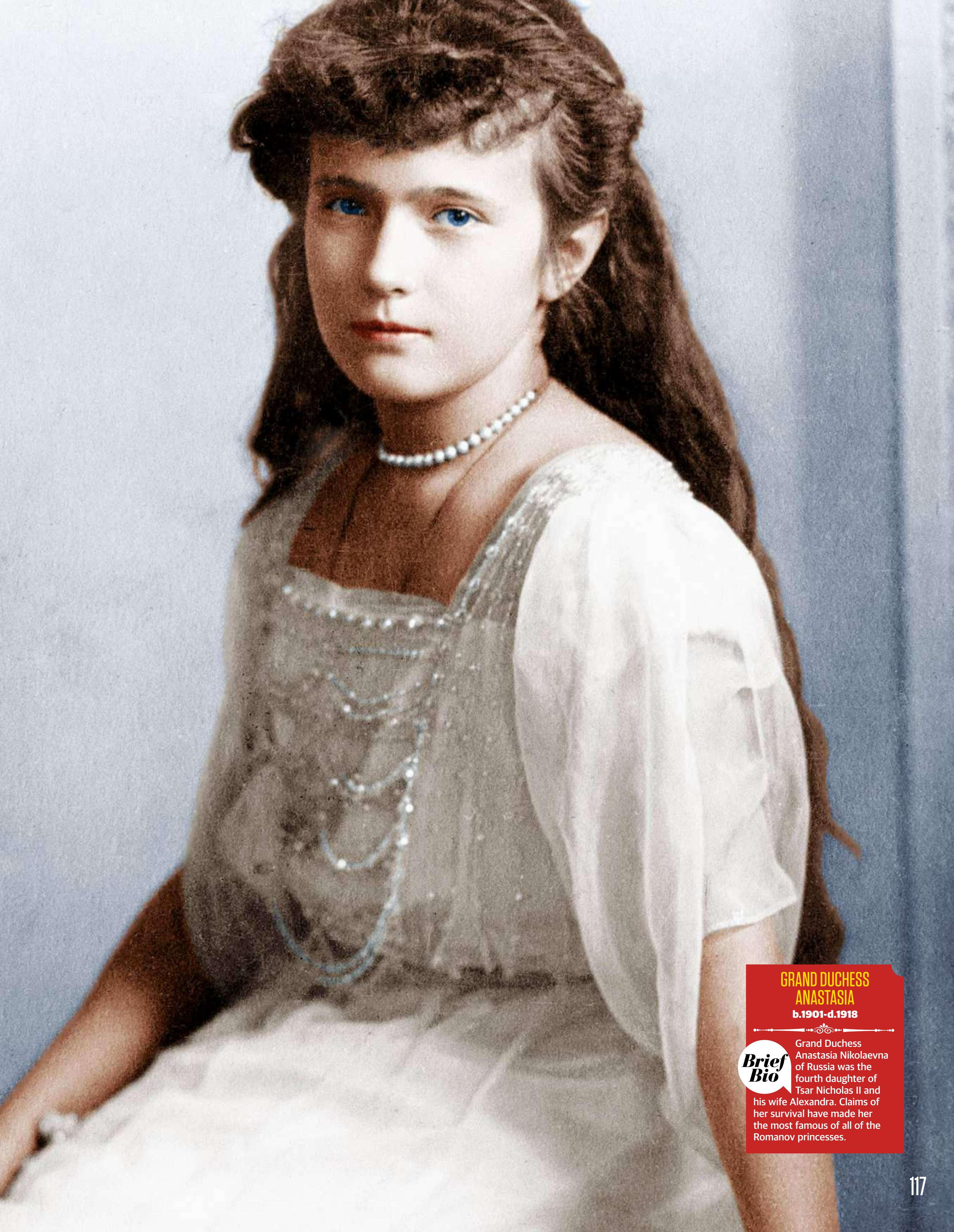
Early on the morning of 17 July 1918, shots rang out from the basement of the ornate Ipatiev House in Ekaterinburg, where the Bolsheviks had imprisoned former Tsar Nicholas II and his family. 30 minutes later, a truck rumbled out of the gate and into the dark Siberian night. No one ever saw the Romanovs again. Just two months earlier, four young women had entered the Ipatiev House: Grand Duchesses Olga, Tatiana, Maria, and Anastasia, the beautiful daughters of Nicholas and Alexandra. This last prison was a far cry from the opulent world of Anastasia's birth on 5 June (OS) / 18 June (NS) 1901 - a world of palaces, yachts and bowing courtiers. Yet like her three sisters, she was brought up simply, sharing a bedroom with Maria, sleeping on an army camp bed and taking cold baths. Anastasia was blessed with fine features and vibrant blue eyes, but felt cursed by her short stature. Everyone agreed that she was vivacious and intelligent, even if her tutor Pierre Gilliard complained that she was "extremely idle, though with the idleness of a gifted child." She'd carved out a place in her family through wit and cutting humour. Anastasia had been a tomboy princess, climbing trees and terrifying relatives with practical jokes. "She undoubtedly held the record for punishable deeds in her family," recalled Gleb Botkin, son of the imperial physician, "for in naughtiness she was a true genius."

By the time her father abdicated the throne in 1917, the golden-haired, blue-eyed girl was beginning to blossom. But for Anastasia there would be no debut balls, no parties: imprisoned in Siberia first by the Provisional Government and then by Lenin's Bolsheviks, she turned 17 in this dirty mining town, surrounded by crude soldiers and a growing aura of menace as the civil war between the Red and White Armies waged around Ekaterinburg.

The Soviet government told the world that Nicholas II had been executed on 17 July 1918: no mention was made of his family. White Army investigator Nicholas Sokolov declared that Ipatiev House commandant Yakov Yurovsky and his men had shot all the Romanovs and the four retainers imprisoned with them - but Sokolov never found any corpses. He theorised that Yurovsky had taken them to the nearby Koptyaki Forest, dismembered the bodies, burned them, and then dissolved what was left in acid before hurling the remains down a mine shaft.

The absence of any tangible Romanov remains fed rumours that one or more members of the family might have escaped. After all, nobody really knew what had happened that July night in 1918, and stories filtered out of Siberia describing how the Bolsheviks had desperately searched for a missing Grand Duchess in the days after the Ekaterinburg massacre. Although suspecting the worst, many Russian émigrés who fled to Europe still clung to the hope that someone had survived.

Fast-forward nearly two years to one cold February night in 1920 - a young woman was rescued from a Berlin canal. At some point she had suffered violence: her jaw was battered and broken,



GRAND DUCHESS ANASTASIA

b.1901-d.1918

Brief Bio

Grand Duchess Anastasia Nikolaevna of Russia was the fourth daughter of Tsar Nicholas II and his wife Alexandra. Claims of her survival have made her the most famous of all of the Romanov princesses.

Anastasia dressed in traditional Russian court dress c.1910

A family photograph taken during the 1910s

“Stories filtered out that the Bolsheviks had searched for a missing Grand Duchess”

her teeth were loose, and doctors speculated that a glancing bullet had caused a slight impression on her head. After she refused to give her name, authorities took her to Dalldorf Asylum, where she remained a largely silent enigma. She wasn’t crazy – on this the doctors and nurses agreed – but she would not speak of her past, at least until 1922, when she stunned everyone by announcing that she was Anastasia, miraculously rescued from slaughter by a sympathetic soldier who’d spirited her out of Russia.

The story spread through the émigré community like wildfire: exiled aristocrats visited the young lady’s bedside and argued about her appearance and ability to speak Russian. Empress Alexandra’s sister, Princess Irene of Prussia, apparently found ‘Anastasia Tchaikovsky,’ as the claimant began calling herself, unconvincing. “I saw immediately that she could not be one of my nieces,” she insisted. But later, she seemed torn, muttering, “She is similar, but what does it mean if it is not she?” Irene, like many, wrestled with some apparently startling coincidences: the claimant shared the real Anastasia’s height, her blue eyes, a deformation of the feet called hallux valgus, and seemed to know intimate details of life within the imperial family.

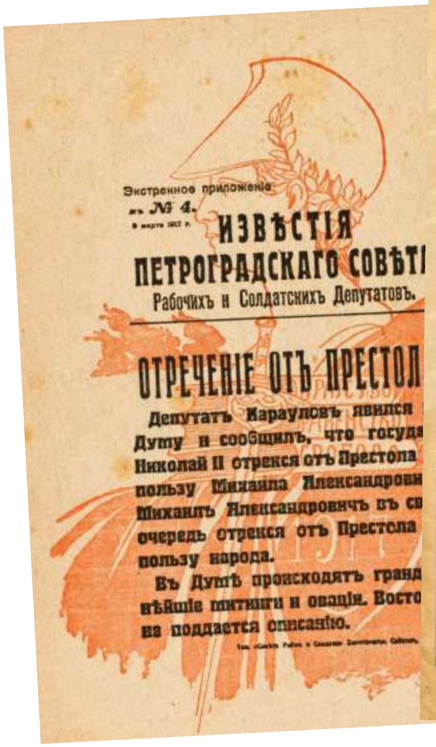
How best to resolve the mystery? In the summer of 1925, Nicholas II’s sister, Grand Duchess Olga, asked Anastasia’s former tutor, Pierre Gilliard, to visit the claimant. “If it is really she, telegraph me and I will join you in Berlin,” she urged. Although Gilliard could not find the slightest resemblance to Anastasia, he didn’t want the responsibility of making a final decision. That autumn, Olga herself came to Berlin; as Anastasia’s godmother and one of the few people who had regularly visited Nicholas and Alexandra, she was best positioned to render a verdict. No one agrees on what happened next. The claimant’s supporters insisted that Olga and Gilliard recognised her as Anastasia; the Grand Duchess even followed the visit with letters, assuring this ‘Anastasia Tchaikovsky’, as she called herself, that she, “was not alone, and we shall not abandon you.” But, privately, Olga confided that she had not found her niece in Berlin. “I believe the story is fraudulent,” she wrote, “but many people believe it and they are the ones who never knew the real Anastasia.”

According to her cousin, Grand Duke Andrei (who recognised the claimant as Anastasia), Olga was less adamant in private: she had been forced to deny her, or so this explanation went, to spare the feelings of her elderly mother, Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna. It would become a common theme: Grand Dukes and Duchesses, princes and princesses accepting or rejecting the claimant amid charges of family pressures that tore Europe’s royal houses apart. Anastasia Tchaikovsky was not without impressive supporters. The real Grand Duchess’s cousin, Prince Sigismund of Prussia, declared her genuine after she answered an apparently obscure list of questions. Empress Alexandra’s friend Lili Dehn was equally convinced: “What can I say after having known her? I certainly cannot be mistaken in her identity.”

Gleb Botkin and his sister Tatiana, whose father had been executed with the family in Ekaterinburg,

became two of the claimant's most vocal supporters. Both insisted the young woman was Anastasia, although they admitted her physical appearance had altered. Botkin became her protector in 1928, arranging for her to visit New York as a guest of Anastasia's cousin, Princess Xenia of Russia. The claimant's haughty manners, blue eyes, and an "intuitive impression of a family resemblance" impressed Xenia, but she found her a difficult guest and, after several months, the claimant moved in with a New York society dowager. Her erratic behaviour and excessive spending led to an ugly scene, with a hysterical Tchaikovsky dragged to an asylum. Soon, she was on her way back to Germany.

After the 1928 death of Nicholas II's mother, 12 Romanov relatives had denounced Anastasia Tchaikovsky as a fraud. A decade later, and now using the name 'Anna Anderson', the claimant took her case to court. At the start of World War I, a Berlin bank had frozen an account belonging to the Tsar; in 1933, what little remained was divided between Nicholas II's surviving relatives, and Anderson's lawyers contested the distribution. The court case, which began in 1938 and continued until 1970 with various interruptions, became the longest running lawsuit in German history.



Экстренное приложеніе
къ № 4.

ИЗВѢСТІЯ
ПЕТРОГРАДСКАГО СОВѢТ
Рабочихъ и Солдатскихъ Депутатовъ.

ОТРЕЧЕНІЕ ОТЪ ПРЕСТОЛ

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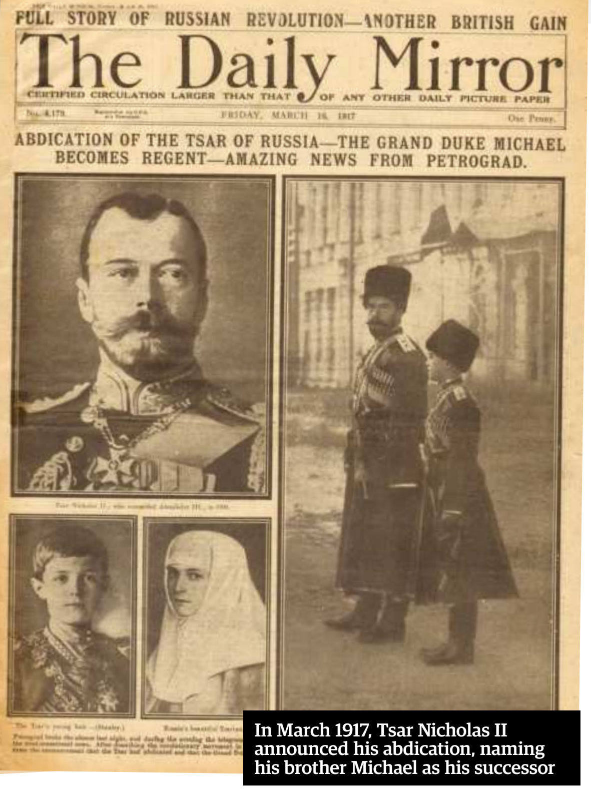

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In March 1917, Tsar Nicholas II announced his abdication, naming his brother Michael as his successor

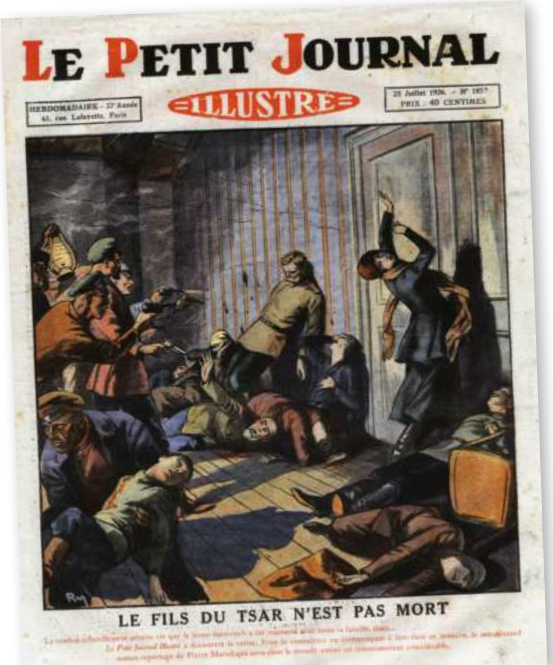
Lord Mountbatten, the real Anastasia's first cousin, paid for much of the defence offered by his royal relatives in Empress Alexandra's homeland of Hesse.

The trials, like so much of the Anastasia case, devolved into frustrating accusations and battles between warring witnesses. For every anthropologist or handwriting expert who insisted that Anderson was the Grand Duchess, the defence countered with opposing opinions. Anderson herself largely refused to co-operate with her attorneys. "You either believe it or you don't believe it," she once said. "It doesn't matter." To many this attitude only added credence to her claim - what imposter would be so garrulous and unco-operative?

By the mid-1950s Anderson was living in the Black Forest, but obscurity eluded her. The 1956 film based on her story, *Anastasia*, not only won actress Ingrid Bergman an Academy Award but also brought bus loads of tourists, who climbed fences surrounding the claimant's little house and shouted for her to appear. Magazines and newspapers around the world turned her into a celebrity with their evocative tales of a lost princess, of a modern-day fairy tale gone tragically wrong. People wanted to believe that, somehow, Anastasia had escaped the terrible massacre of her family. When the legal decision finally came in 1970, it satisfied no one. Anderson hadn't proved she was Anastasia; on the other hand, the West German Supreme Court declared that there was no conclusive proof that the real Grand Duchess had died in 1918.

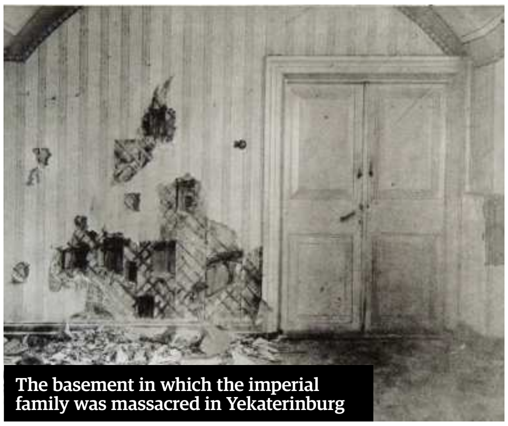
By this time, Anderson had left Germany for good. In 1968, Gleb Botkin had again brought her to the United States and introduced her to wealthy retired history professor Jack Manahan. Anderson liked the USA, especially the university town of Charlottesville, Virginia, where both Botkin and Manahan lived. On 23 December 1968, she and Manahan were married, with Botkin looking on as best man; the professor proudly called himself the "son-in-law to the Tsar".

For a time, the highly eccentric Manahans became popular figures in Charlottesville. The diminutive 'Grand Duchess' made regular appearances at a posh country club attired in plaid trousers, red plastic raincoats and yellow hats, though her questionable table manners and loud arguments with her husband in a string of broken English and German unnerved sophisticates. More and more, the Manahans retreated to a once-elegant house, where they lived surrounded by piles of garbage, rotting vegetables and a horde of



Published in July 1926, a French journal reconstructs the execution of the Romanovs with a sensationalist caption stating, "The Tsar's son is not dead"

A postcard image of Anastasia that was circulated



The basement in which the imperial family was massacred in Yekaterinburg

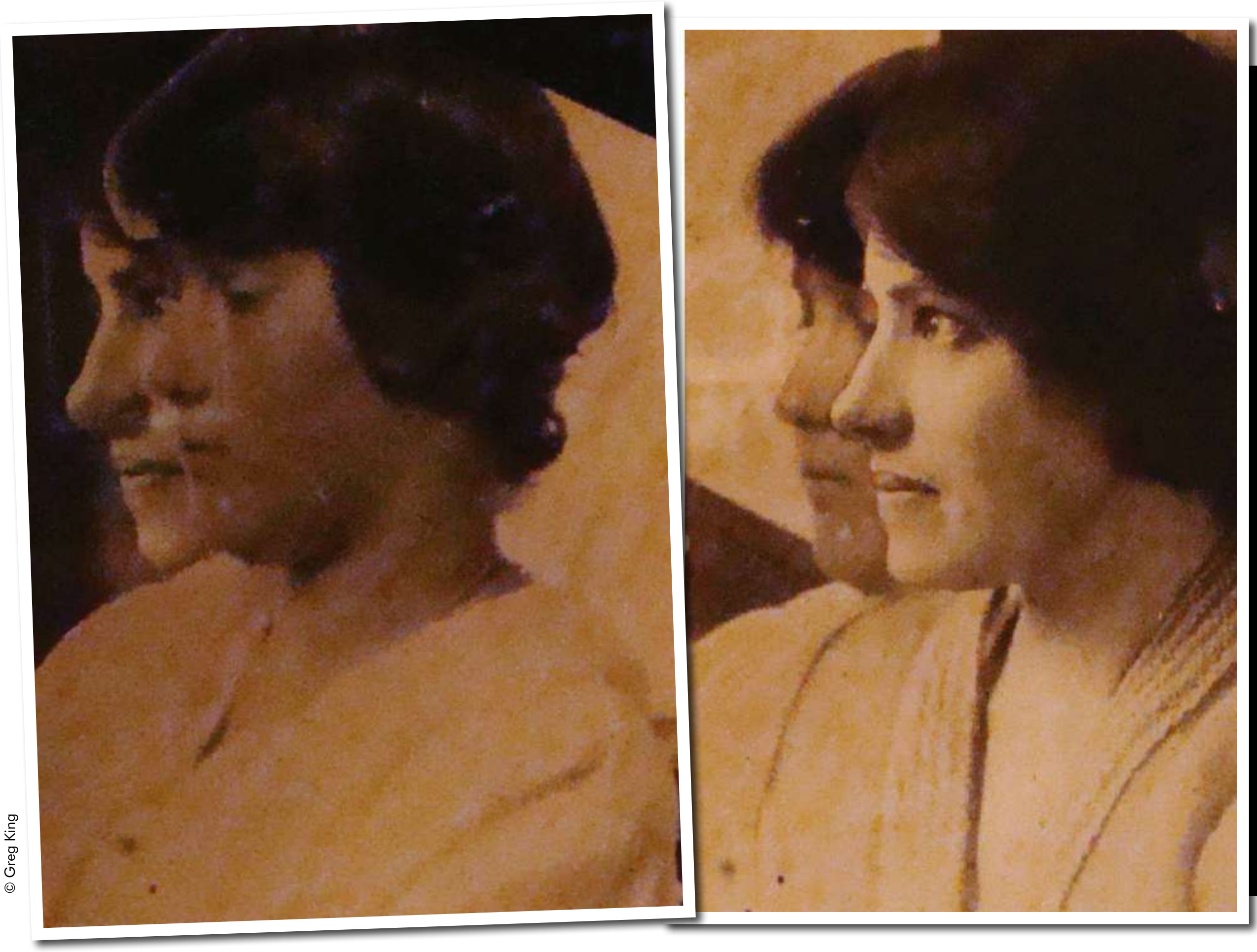
The Russian Anastasias

A pair of unlikely pretenders

Nadezhda Ivanova-Vasilyeva, a Russian Anastasia imposter

Imperial claimants were not merely a Western phenomenon: more than a dozen 'Anastasias' appeared in Russia, including Nadezhda Ivanova-Vasilyeva and Natalya Bilikhodze. After Ivanova-Vasilyeva surfaced in 1934, Moscow authorities arrested her as a counter-revolutionary. She managed to send letters to King George V revealing her 'identity' before being locked away in an asylum as "a mentally sick person representing a danger to society". Doctors examined her and found that she bore numerous scars from bullet wounds but, aside from this and the fact that she spoke French and German, there was nothing to substantiate her claim. She died, still incarcerated, in 1971 and was buried in an unmarked grave.

Rather more startling was the 2002 appearance of Natalya Bilikhodze, who claimed to be a 101-year-old Anastasia, rescued by White Army officers from Ekaterinburg. A Moscow press conference, covered by international media, declared that 22 studies in Germany and Japan, including handwriting analysis, photographic comparisons and DNA profiling, had matched Bilikhodze to Anastasia: the results to be released shortly. Bilikhodze announced that as soon as she was recognised, she would give the Russian government the 2 trillion dollars she claimed Nicholas II had deposited in foreign banks. None of the promised test results were ever released, and Bilikhodze died in obscurity a short while later.



© Greg King

Anastasia and her imposter

Initially duped by Anna Anderson, Pierre Gilliard later became the strongest voice against the Grand Duchess' imposter, going so far as to publish a book entitled *La Fausse Anastasie* ('The False Anastasia'). In his book, he featured his 1927 photographic tests of the two women. He superimposed the face of Anastasia (taken from a photograph during his time as her tutor) above the face of Anna Anderson and vice versa in an attempt to compare the physical features of the face. His conclusion was that there were too many differences – the two women simply couldn't be the same person. For the rest of his life he denounced Anna Anderson as a fraud for trying to steal the identity of poor Anastasia.

inbred cats and dogs. Reporters and writers still called on this most famous of royal claimants. In 1983, when author Peter Kurth published his biography of Anderson, the evidence put forth in her favour seemed overwhelming. For much of the public, she had become Anastasia. This was how she was largely remembered by the world when, on 12 February 1984, she died of pneumonia at the presumed age of 82.

Anderson's claim, or so it seemed, was destined to remain an enigma. Then, in 1989, the Russian government revealed that Yakov Yurovsky, the commandant of the Ipatiev House who led the execution, left several accounts detailing the shooting and disposal of the bodies. When the truck carrying the corpses broke down in the Koptyaki Forest, he said, they had burned the remains of Alexei and one of his sisters and buried them apart from the other nine victims. Two years later, the mass grave was exhumed. British and American experts were able to match DNA from four of the skeletal remains to a sample donated by the Duke of Edinburgh, whose grandmother was Empress Alexandra's sister, while Romanov relatives proved a match to the bones belonging to Nicholas II. But rather than end the story, the exhumation only fed imaginations: two bodies were still missing, those of the haemophiliac heir Alexei and one of his sisters. Despite searches, investigations failed to find the second grave Yurovsky described. Perhaps hoping to put an end to stories of survival, Russian scientists – using photographic comparisons – insisted Anastasia's body had been found and that Grand Duchess Maria was missing. American experts, though, said the development of the teeth, the sacrum and bones indicated that Anastasia was not in the mass grave.

> "The exhumation only fed imaginations: two bodies were still missing"

Had Anderson really been Anastasia? With DNA available, scientists set out to solve the mystery. Anderson's body had been cremated, but a small portion of her intestine had been removed in 1979 and stored in a Charlottesville hospital. Locks of her hair had also been saved, allowing for a genetic comparison with the Romanov remains. The results were startling: Anderson did not match the DNA of the exhumed remains or Romanov relatives. She couldn't possibly have been Anastasia.

But if not Anastasia, who had she been? Since the late 1920s, her opponents had suggested that she was really Franziska Schanzkowska, a young German factory worker from West Prussia in what is modern-day Poland who had gone missing in Berlin just days before police pulled Anderson from a canal. Scientists obtained a blood sample from Schanzkowska's great-nephew Karl Maucher and tested it against the intestine and hair profiles. The results matched: the most famous royal claimant had actually been a provincial farm girl.

This identification did little to resolve the mystery. How, people wondered, could an uneducated Polish peasant pass herself off to a host of royals and aristocrats as a genuine grand duchess? What of the matching scars, the hallux valgus of the feet, the same blue eyes, the volumes of apparent memories that had convinced so many? The truth was as astonishing as any tale of miraculous survival: Franziska Schanzkowska's charade revealed her as a woman of considerable abilities, talent and cunning, every bit as remarkable as the princess whose identity she claimed.

Born in 1896 into a formerly ennobled family that had fallen on hard times, Franziska had been a bright, intelligent child who spoke three languages and excelled in her studies, not the uneducated peasant often described by history. An unhappy home life, with an alcoholic father and abusive mother, led her to dream of better things. Friends in her native village of Hygendorf remembered how she "displayed pretentious manners". At 17, she'd moved to Berlin and got a job in a munitions factory. On 22 August 1916, she dropped a grenade: a foreman was killed and Franziska suffered a nervous breakdown. For the next two years she was in and out of asylums before taking a job as an agricultural worker in northern Germany alongside Russian prisoners-of-war. She picked up enough Russian to understand, if not convincingly speak it. Then, in the autumn of 1918, one of these soldiers attacked Franziska for reasons unknown, turning his farming tools on her and leaving her with the broken jaw, loose teeth, and scars she later said she had received during the Ekaterinburg massacre.

For the next 15 months, Franziska lived with Anna Wingender and her daughter Doris at their Berlin flat, depressed and complaining about her aching head and teeth. "She was always talking about how she wanted to be someone grand," Anna recalled. Franziska rarely left the apartment. She spent her days in bed, reading romance novels - at least until she disappeared in the third week of February 1920. The Wingenders had no idea what had become of her until 1927, when they saw Franziska's photograph in newspapers reporting 'Anastasia's' survival. An editor put them in touch with Martin Knopf, a private detective hired by Tsarina Alexandra's brother, Grand Duke Ernst Ludwig of Hesse, who soon tracked down Franziska's mother Marianna and younger sister Maria Juliana in Hygendorf. Both identified the claimant as their missing daughter, as did Franziska's former village friends. When confronted with the claimant face to face, Doris Wingender readily recognised her mother's lodger; Franziska's younger brother, Felix, too identified his sister, although he quickly recanted, fearing his family would be held liable for her fraud. A decade later, the Nazi government arranged another confrontation between Franziska and her family. Her sister Gertrude immediately recognised Franziska, but after a hasty conference, her siblings convinced her not to sign a statement. Felix had earlier lied to protect his mother from a possible lawsuit; now, the family had to protect Felix from the same concerns.

> "That the charade was so convincing was testament to her abilities"

The Church of the Blood was built on the site of the brutal Romanov massacre

Amazingly, Anderson's supporters dismissed her identification as Franziska, insisting that it was nothing but a fairy tale cooked up by her opponents. This was the power of desire, and it fed the myth that she made seem so believable. Franziska used this desire to further her claim, to play upon the hopes of those enchanted with this tragic tale. She read voraciously, studied royal postcards, took lessons in English, and engaged in a delicate and dangerous dance for 60 years, unwilling to press her claim for fear of exposure. "Who I am and who I pretend to be," she once said in an unguarded moment. That the charade was so compellingly convincing was testament to her undoubted abilities. Anastasia may have died in 1918, but through Franziska she lived on to become the most famous Russian princess in history.

Photographed here at the presumed age of 82, Anna Anderson - known at this point as Anastasia Manahan - died in 1984, at her actual age of 87

In July 1991, Russian scientists claimed to have found Anastasia's skeleton in the mass grave near Yekaterinburg

The mystery solved

The true fate of the Romanovs

On 17 July 1998 - the 70th anniversary of the Ekaterinburg massacre - the remains of Nicholas II, his wife Alexandra and three of their four daughters, along with the four retainers killed with them - were given a state funeral and interred in Saint Petersburg's Cathedral of the Fortress of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, the traditional resting place of the Romanovs. Two years later, the Russian Orthodox Church canonised the imperial family as Passion Bearers. But two bodies were still missing. For 16 years, teams searched the Koptyaki Forest, looking for the second grave described by Yurovsky. Then, in August 2007, a group of historians and archaeologists located a shallow pit some 60 metres from the exhumed mass grave. Within, they discovered 48 chopped and charred bone fragments, including pieces of femurs and skulls, as well as a number of teeth. Forensic analysis showed that they had come from two separate individuals, a male between the ages of 12-15, and a female of between 15-19. Dr Michael Coble of the United States Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory conducted genetic testing. Both sets of remains were identified as having been children of Nicholas II and Alexandra. The missing heir, Alexei, had finally been found. But which Grand Duchess had been unearthed? Russian scientists insisted that the female remains belonged to Maria. American forensic experts again identified them as Anastasia - a controversy likely never to be resolved. Once investigations are completed, the Russian government plans to inter the remains in Saint Petersburg.

A portrait of Anna taken in 1929 when she was living in the USA

The cottage in the Black Forest, Germany, where Anna lived until 1968

Who was Eugenia Smith?

The aged rival to Anna Anderson's claim to royal Romanov blood

An autumn 1963 cover story in *Life* magazine announced "The Case of a New Anastasia". Declaring that she was really the Grand Duchess, Eugenia Smith of Chicago appeared out of nowhere, promoting the release of her purported memoirs. Like Anderson, she too claimed that a sympathetic guard had rescued her from the Ekaterinburg massacre and taken her to Europe.

According to a former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) agent, she passed several polygraph tests, though anthropologists and handwriting experts undermined her claim, as did Princess Nina Chavchavadze, the real Anastasia's cousin, who met Smith and declared her a fraud. "The whole face is wrong," the Princess insisted. "Everything, the nose, the ears, the mouth, is too small. The Russian accent is not at all right. When I wanted to talk about our childhood, she said that I must understand that she has a terrible memory for such things."

The claim turned bizarre when Smith met with a former Polish agent, Colonel Michael Goloniewski, who claimed that he was the princess's brother Alexei, in 1963. At their meeting, the pair "recognised" each other as their missing sibling (however, the two later fell out and repudiated their mutual 'recognitions'). It didn't take long for researchers to learn that Smith had been born Eugenia Drabek in 1899 in Bukovina.

Anna Anderson was furious at these 'revelations': Eugenia Smith, she insisted, was nothing but "a creature of Mountbatten", meant to undermine her own claim. Nonetheless, Smith attracted a handful of supporters, who thought her polished manner more in keeping with the behaviour and mannerisms of a real Grand Duchess, over Anderson's erratic conduct.

Smith refused to submit to DNA testing after the Romanov remains were found in 1991, and she died in Rhode Island six years later, having never abandoned her claim that she was the lost Grand Duchess Anastasia.

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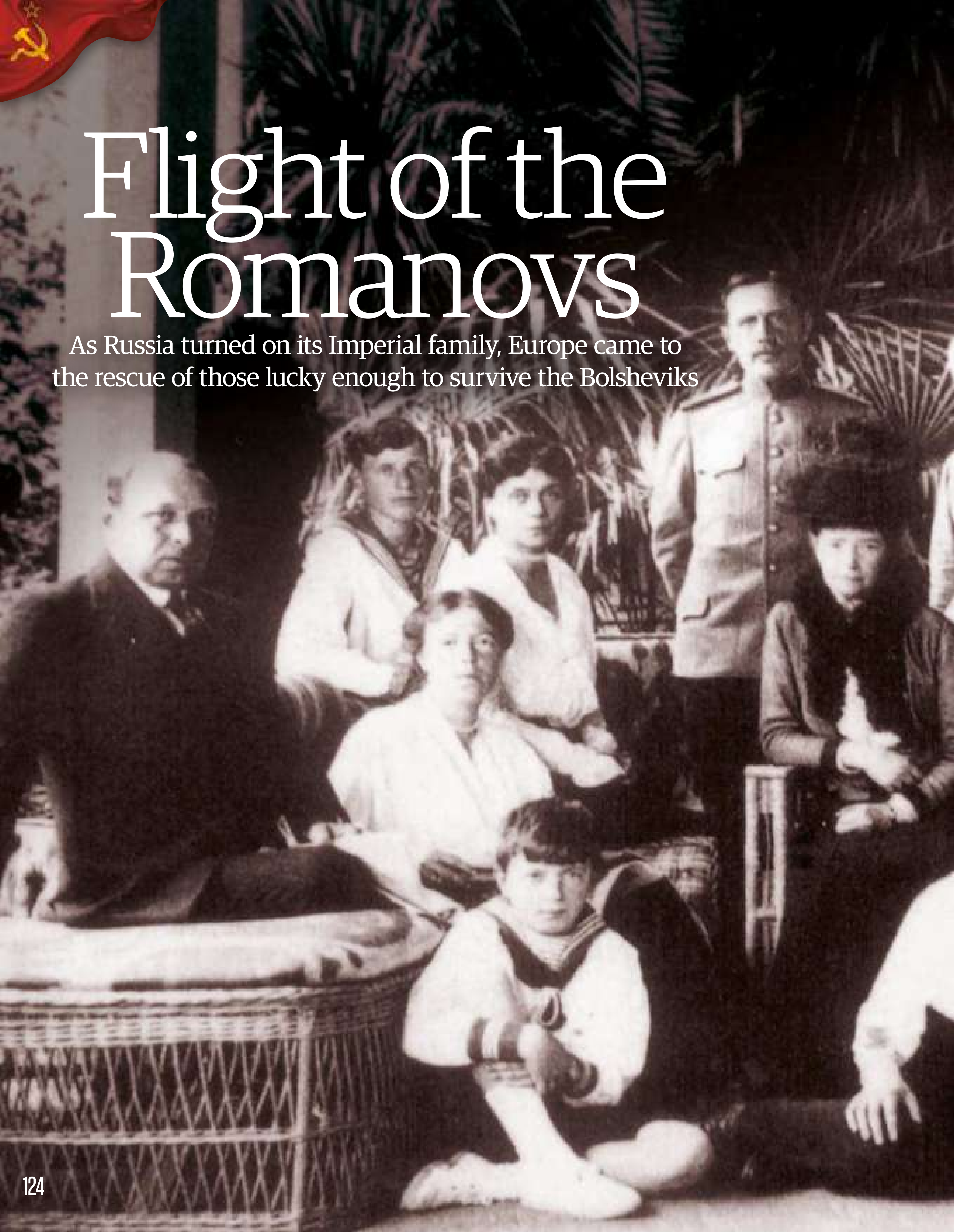


Flight of the Romanovs

As Russia turned on its Imperial family, Europe came to the rescue of those lucky enough to survive the Bolsheviks

Flight of the Romanovs

The Romanov family under house arrest in the Crimea before their rescue in 1919

When Nicholas II was forced to abdicate in 1917, there were few who could have foreseen where things would end for the Russian Tsar and his immediate family. The Tsar, his wife the Tsarina Alexandra, their four daughters, Olga, Tatiana, Maria and Anastasia and the young and ailing Alexei, the Tsar's heir, suffered numerous humiliations and deprivations over the months to follow, the mighty brought devastatingly low.

By the fateful day of 16 July 1918, the family had been under house arrest in Yekaterinburg for 78 days. At the mercy of their Bolshevik captors, their spirits were low as, despite rumours of rescue, the days continued to pass and help did not arrive. That night, the family were woken and instructed to dress, before making their way downstairs. No doubt confused as to what was occurring, they were joined by the doctor who oversaw the care of the ailing Tsarevich, the Tsar's valet, the family cook, and a parlourmaid, the latter carrying the family jewels sewn inside a pillow, and were told that they were to be moved for their own safety as the advancing Czech Army was nearing Yekaterinburg. Instead of being taken from the house, the family were escorted into a basement, where they waited at the pleasure of their captors.

It was not until the arrival of a contingent of armed men, headed by Yakov Yurovsky, the man in charge of the guards who watched the former Imperial family, that their fate became clear; Yurovsky informed the Tsar that he and the others were to be shot.

The murder of the Russian imperial family is perhaps one of the best-known and most intriguing tragedies of the 20th century. Amid the rampant debate and speculation that surrounds the story, one of the recurring questions is why the terrible events happened at all, and, crucially, why were Nicholas II and his family left to suffer their horrendous fate – a destiny that had been predicted years before by many?

One direction in which the finger of blame has been pointed is towards the British monarch, King George V. First cousin to the ill-fated Tsar, his failure – or downright refusal – to help Nicholas and his family has often been met with great censure from historians and enthusiasts alike. It cannot, of course, be denied that George failed to save his cousin and his family, but to what extent should he be tarred with such a legacy? Politically, there was good reason for George to think twice before offering refuge to his despised cousin, despite the latter's perilous situation. Although the two were close and on good terms, the delicate political situation left the British king with a stark choice between family and his country and crown.

Indeed, in the wake of the Russian Revolution and the Great War, George was accused by some of being 'too German' due to his family connections: after all, the German Kaiser was a first cousin of the British king, and the Russian Tsar himself was a third cousin to Wilhelm II. Letting the fleeing Romanovs into the country was, it was feared,

Maria Feodorovna fled Russia and took up residence in England, before returning to her homeland of Denmark

a sure-fire way to bring revolution and chaos to Britain that the country and the monarch could ill-afford. Speaking in favour of George V, Prince Michael of Kent defended the King by maintaining that it was the vehement opposition of the British people that kept George from acting, and that even then, moves were made to rescue his cousin, with several plans made and thwarted before they could come to anything.

It must also be remembered that hindsight is perfect but useless: George cannot have known for certain the terrible fate that awaited 'Nicky' and his family. Rather than solely blaming the British king, blame has often been placed at the door of the prime minister of the time, Lloyd George, with George V apologists insisting it was the minister who had the final say. This theory was discredited in the 1980s however, when sealed cabinet papers revealed that the prime minister had not been the one to sway the king's decision.

Another popular argument, especially within the British royal family, maintains that Queen Mary, George's wife, was the fly in the ointment and the reason for Britain's refusal to give the Romanovs refuge. Derided as a heartless harridan and as having too much influence on the king, Mary has received bad press over the years for her supposed role in swaying her husband's mind. There has been no official proof of this however, and cabinet papers remain silent on the matter.

What of help from other quarters in Europe? Spain, Sweden and Norway, among others, all made moves to help the Romanovs, but such plans failed, evaporated or were turned down. It has been suggested that the Tsar himself played a role in the ultimate fate of his family, and it seems that not only the Tsar but also the wider Romanov family who remained in Russia, did not fully appreciate the danger that threatened them. Grand Duke Kirill, cousin to Nicholas II and the man who took his place as head of the family, was one of the few to take heed of the perilous situation in Russia: with permission granted by the provisional government he moved to Borga, Finland, in June 1917.

"The Tsar and his family were not the only Romanov casualties during 1918"

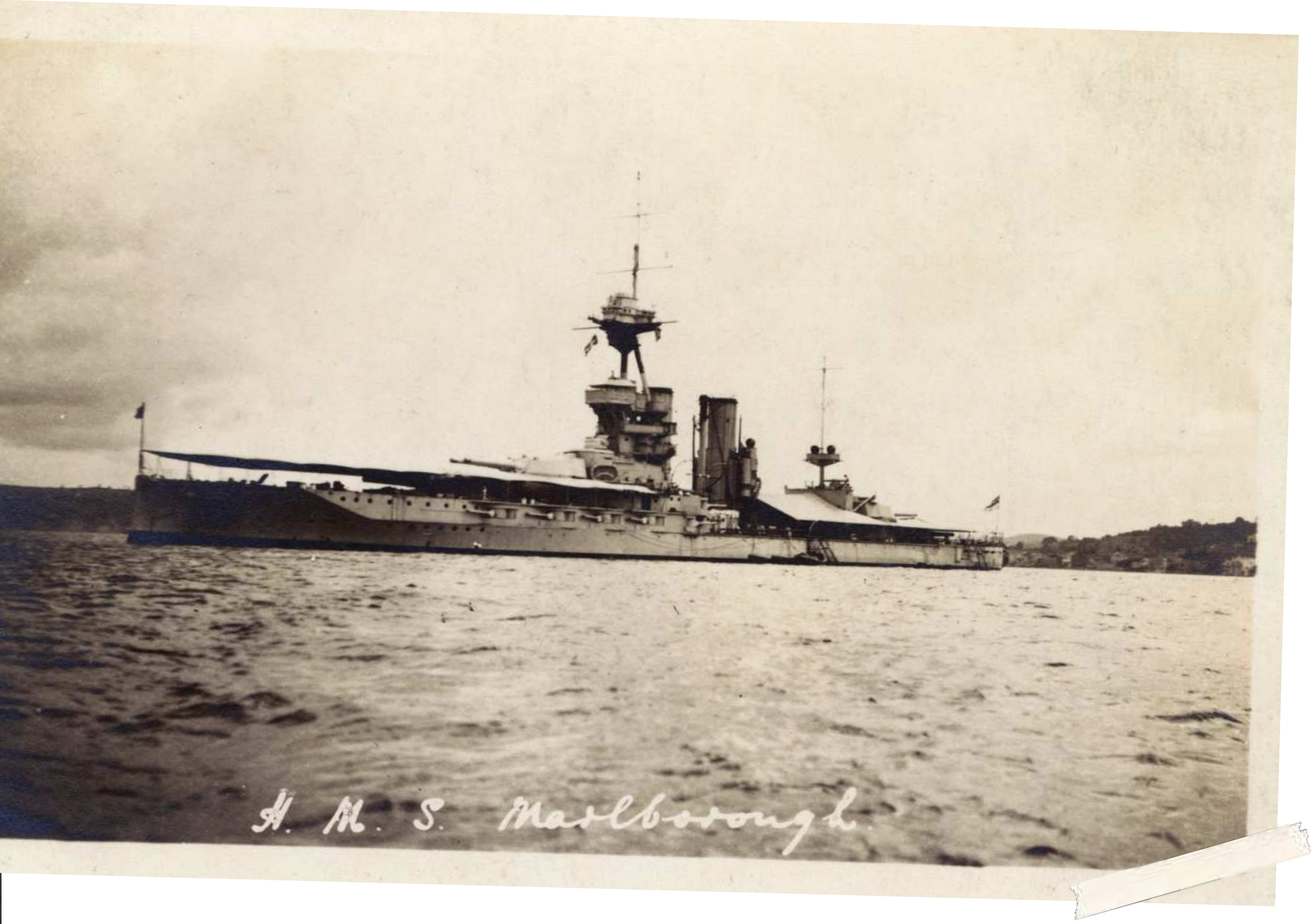
This, however, was the first and only move from the family: due to a variety of factors, no more Romanovs were to leave Russia until late 1918, a delay which had grievous consequences and cost the lives of many. Ultimately, it must also be remembered that the Tsar and his family had been held under house arrest with the belief – shared by the family and other powers of Europe – that they were to stand trial. That the unthinkable could happen was not something that either side had realised until it was too late.

Unfortunately, the Tsar and his family were not the only Romanov casualties during 1918. The Tsar's younger brother, Grand Duke Michael, was murdered in Perm in June, just a month before the massacre of the Tsar and his household at Yekaterinburg. To add to the tragedy, the Tsarina's sister, Elisabeth, who had become a nun after the 1905 assassination of her husband, Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich, was, along with one of the Tsar's cousins and three princes of Romanov blood, buried alive in a mineshaft the night after the Tsar was murdered. Tragically, the German Kaiser, enemy to Britain and Russia, had offered refuge to Elisabeth on several occasions, but his help had been firmly rebuffed.

Although the death of the Tsar was finally admitted, no official word was given regarding his wife and children, or the other murdered Romanovs. Rumours abounded, and it was nearly impossible for those who remained to know the truth of what happened. But it became clear that the time had come to leave Russia, and as the year progressed, the exodus began.

Grand Duchess Elizabeth, the wife of Grand Duke Konstantine and mother of the princes that had been buried alive, took refuge in Sweden in November 1918. Accompanying her were her two youngest children and two of her grandchildren. Prince Gabriel, the eldest son of Grand Duke

King George V with his cousin Tsar Nicholas II



Konstantine to survive, was imprisoned but eventually released, finding refuge in Finland with the help of writer Maxim Gorki. Other members of the family were offered or sought refuge in Romania and Denmark. King Victor Emmanuel III of Italy and the kings of Montenegro and Sweden courted the Romanovs, with varying degrees of success. There were still those who were reluctant to leave however, and it was February 1920 by the time the last of the Romanovs left for good.

In spite of – or perhaps because of – the failure to rescue the Tsar and his ill-fated family, Britain was at the forefront of the biggest rescue expedition launched to help the remaining Romanovs in Russia. The two largest and most prominent groups were those headed by the Dowager Empress, Maria Feodorovna – mother to the murdered Tsar and Grand Duke Michael – and Grand Duke Nicholas, former commander-in-chief of the Russian Army and first cousin once removed of Tsar Nicholas II. The two families had been residing in the Crimea since 1917, where they were effectively held under house arrest, the Dowager Empress inhabiting the estate of Ai-Todor while the Grand Duke Nicholas resided at the nearby Dulber estate.

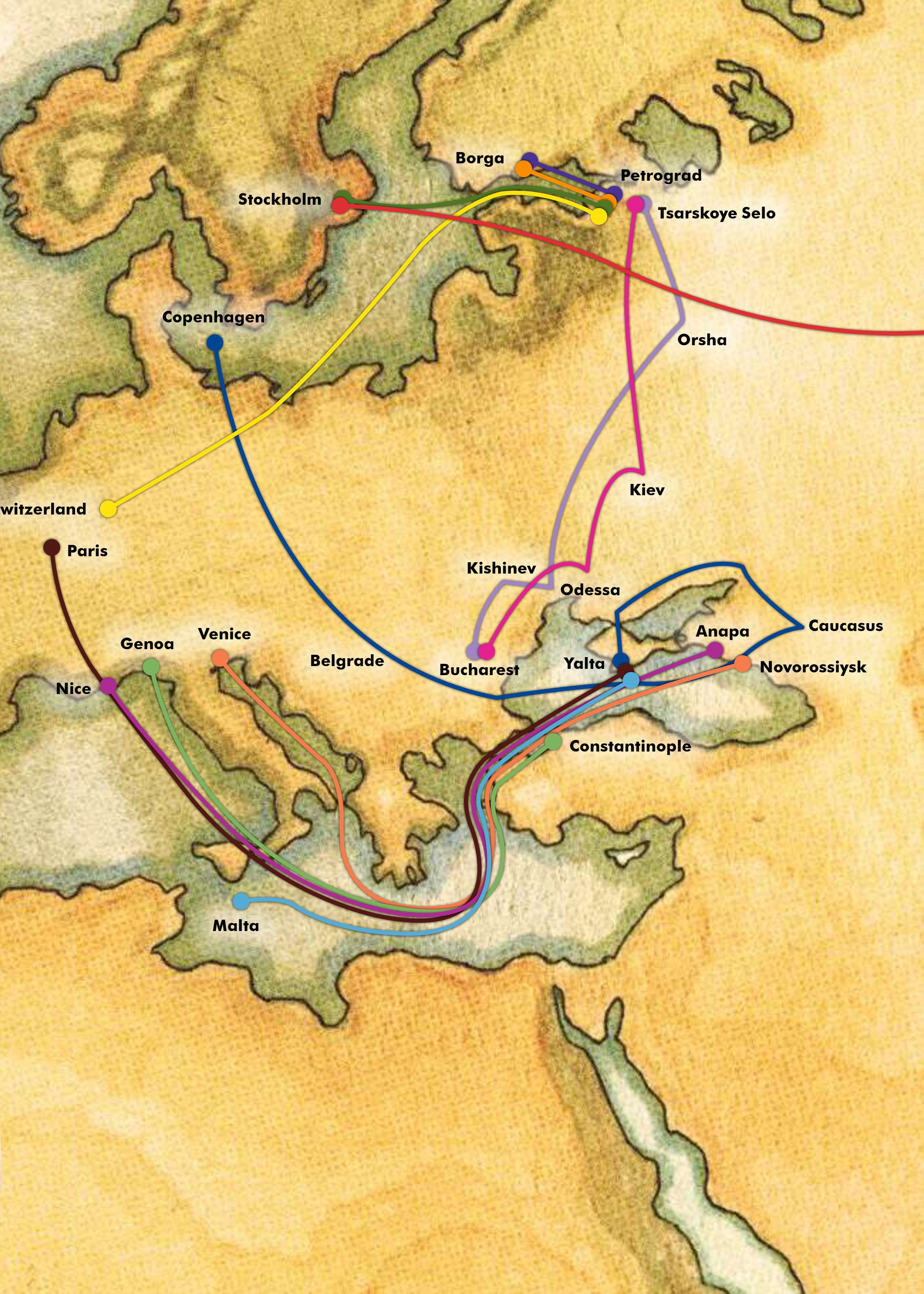
Now, in the wake of the Armistice being signed, the British government was growing increasingly worried about the remaining Romanovs, and a concerted effort was made to extract the Dowager Empress – sister to the British Queen Alexandra, wife of Edward VII – before she could suffer the same fate as her massacred sons. Maria Feodorovna, however, was less than co-operative; an initial plan for a secret rescue had already been rejected. When her sister, Alexandra, wrote in December of 1918, adding her voice to those who were, with varying degrees of firmness, telling the Dowager Empress that she should leave, Maria merely thanked her kindly for her concern but informed her sister that she would be remaining in Russia for Christmas. Matters grew increasingly pressing, until George V himself intervened. The Romanov parties from Ai-Todor and Dulber would be evacuated by the British Navy along with other refugees and taken to safety, and plans were drawn up for the operation to be carried out quickly. Even then it was April 1919 before the Dowager Empress accepted the inevitable, finally agreeing to leave only after she was assured that her own ship would be the last to leave Russia.

HMS Marlborough was to remove the remaining Romanovs from the Crimea – a war ship that might be considered ill-designed for the carrying of such esteemed passengers. Within any family tensions exist, and the Romanovs were no exception. This fact was exacerbated by the heightened political situation in Russia and the circumstances they had lived through. Maria Feodorovna and Grand Duke Nicholas, despite being neighbours on their Crimean estates, were decidedly at odds with one another, and this ongoing feud was to echo bitterly through the voyage.

7 April 1919, the day designated for the families to embark, did not get off to a good start. Maria Feodorovna was late to arrive, causing worry and annoyance among family and crew alike. Once the Romanovs were aboard, it was apparent that the captain of the HMS Marlborough had been ill-informed, as there were many more people than they had expected, not to mention the family dogs. There was a vast quantity of unlabelled luggage that had to be reunited with each owner, a feat finally achieved by First Lieutenant Pridham with the help of the Grand Duchess Marina, the only one aboard who could speak Russian and English.

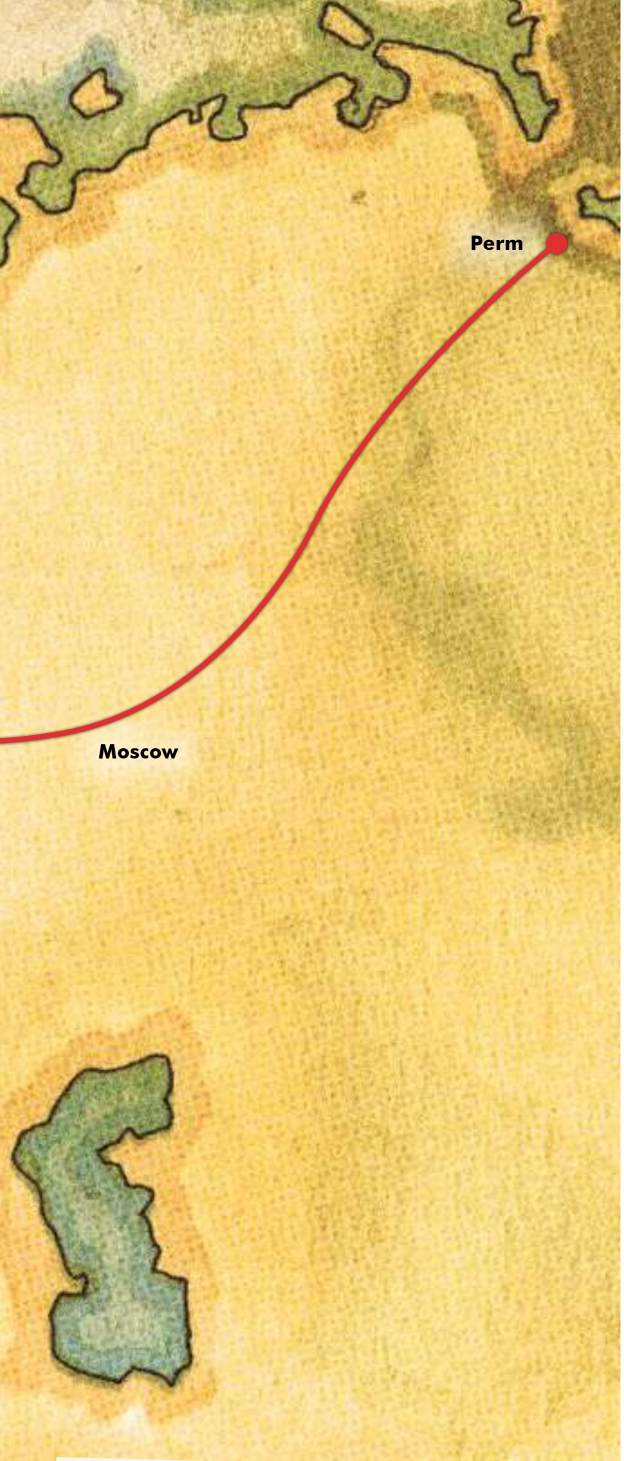
The Romanov survival guide

Not all of the Romanovs fled aboard HMS Marlborough, so how did the remaining survivors escape?



Borga
Petrograd
Stockholm
Tsarskoye Selo
Copenhagen
Orsha
Switzerland
Kiev
Paris
Kishinev
Odessa
Caucasus
Venice
Anapa
Genoa
Belgrade
Bucharest
Yalta
Novorossiysk
Nice
Constantinople
Malta

A Russian refugee plays aboard HMS Marlborough



ROUTE 1

Petrograd-Borga

Survivors:

Grand Duke Kirill Vladimirovich
Grand Duchess Victoria Feodorovna
Princess Kira Kirillovna
Princess Marie Kirillovna

In June 1917, Grand Duke Kirill, his pregnant wife and their daughters fled Petrograd to Borga, Finland, after receiving permission from the Provisional Government.

ROUTE 2

Petrograd-Borga

Survivors:

Prince Gabriel Konstantinovich
Antonina Rafailovna Nesterovskaya

Having been imprisoned in Petrograd, Prince Gabriel's wife, Antonina, and writer Maxim Gorki fought to bring about the prince's release, which happened in 1918. The couple fled to Finland, later settling down in Paris.

ROUTE 3

Petrograd-Stockholm

Survivors:

Grand Duchess Elizabeth Mavrikievna
Prince Georgy Konstantinovich
Princess Vera Konstantinovich
Prince Vsevolod Ivanovich
Princess Catherine Ivanovna

With permission from the government, the group accepted Queen Victoria of Sweden's invitation and set sail aboard the Angermanland in November 1918.

ROUTE 4

Tsarskoye Selo-Orsha-Odessa-Kishinev-Bucharest

Survivors:

Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna the Younger
Prince Sergei Mikhailovich Puliatin

The couple fled Petrograd in July 1918, aiming to reach the south of Russia, which was held by German forces. After receiving an invite from Queen Marie of Romania, the pair sought refuge in Bucharest. To prove her royal identity, Marie stashed her papers in a bar of soap, ensuring the pair were quickly taken to safety.

ROUTE 5

Perm-Moscow-Stockholm

Survivors:

Princess Elena Petrovna

Having been captured and taken prisoner, Helen was sent to prison in Perm. With the insistence of Norwegian diplomats, she was moved to Moscow and later fled Russia to Sweden.

ROUTE 6

Petrograd-Switzerland

Survivors:

Grand Duchess Olga Konstantinovna

The Dowager Queen of Greece had returned to her homeland, where she set up a military hospital when WWI broke out. When she tried to leave Russia, she was detained. It was only when the Danish government intervened that she was permitted to leave. She went to Switzerland to join her son, Constantine I of Greece.

ROUTE 7

Tsarskoye Selo-Kiev-Odessa-Bucharest

Survivors:

Princess Tatiana Konstantinovna
Prince Teymuraz Constantinovich Bagration
Princess Natalia Constantinovna Bagration

Tatiana and her children had lived with her uncle, but upon his arrest she fled south through Kiev and Odessa, finally reaching Romania in 1919.

ROUTE 8

Yalta-Paris

Survivors:

Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich
Prince Andrei Alexandrovich
Elisabetta Ruffo Di Saint Antimo

Under the pretence of representing the Romanov family at the Paris Peace Conference, Grand Duke Alexander fled with his eldest son and daughter-in-law aboard HMS Forsythe in December 1918.

ROUTE 9

Anapa-Constantinople-Nice

Survivors:

Grand Duke Boris Vladimirovich
Zina Sergeivna Raschevskaya

Boris escaped Russia via Anapa with his mistress (later his wife). The pair eventually settled in France.

ROUTE 10

Yalta-Constantinople-Malta

Survivors:

Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna
Grand Duchess Xenia Alexandrovna
Princess Irina Alexandrovna Yusupova
Prince Felix Yusupov
Prince Felix Felixovich
Princess Zinaida Nikolaevna
Princess Irina Felixovna Yusupova
Prince Feodor Alexandrovich
Prince Nikita Alexandrovich
Prince Dmitri Alexandrovich
Prince Rostislav Alexandrovich
Prince Vasili Alexandrovich

ROUTE 11

Constantinople-Genoa

Survivors:

Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich
Grand Duchess Anastasia Nikolaevna (of Montenegro)
Prince Sergei Georgievich
Princess Helen Georgievna of Leuchtenberg
Count Stefan Tyszkiewicz
Grand Duke Peter Nikolaevich
Grand Duchess Militza Nikolaevna
Prince Roman Petrovich
Princess Marina Petrovna
Princess Nadejda Petrovna Orlova
Prince Nicholas Vladimirovich Orlov
Princess Irina Nikolaevna Orlova

ROUTE 12

Yalta-Caucasus-Novorossiysk-Belgrade-Copenhagen

Survivors:

Grand Duchess Olga Alexandrovna
Nicholas Alexandrovich Kulikovsky
Tikhon Nikolaevich
Guri Nikolaevich

Initially travelling the same route to Yalta as her mother, Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna, Olga was determined to stay in Russia and travelled along the coast to Novorossiysk. In early 1920 the family fled to Serbia, and later on to Copenhagen.

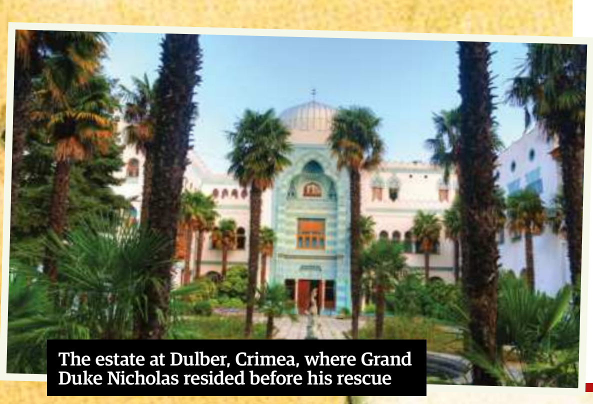
ROUTE 13

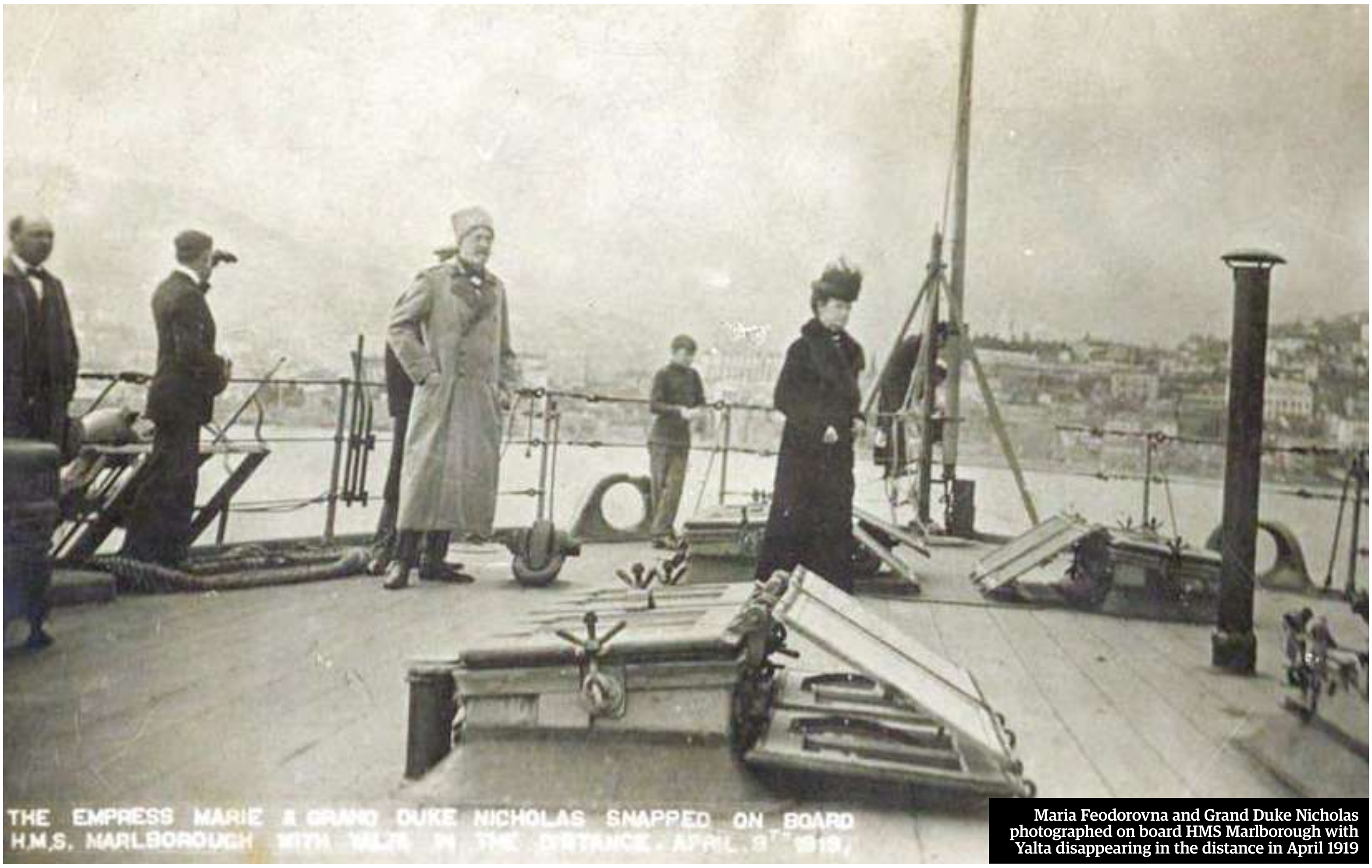
Novorossiysk-Venice

Survivors:

Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna the Elder
Grand Duke Andrei Vladimirovich
Mathilda-Marie Feliksovna Kschessinskaya
Prince Vladimir Andreivich Krassinsky

The last of the Romanovs to flee Russia, Maria, her son, his mistress and their child fled on the Semiranisa, an Italian liner that took them to Italy.


The estate at Dulber, Crimea, where Grand Duke Nicholas resided before his rescue


THE EMPRESS MARIE & GRAND DUKE NICHOLAS SNAPPED ON BOARD
H.M.S. MARLBOROUGH WITH YALTA IN THE DISTANCE. APRIL 9TH 1919.

Maria Feodorovna and Grand Duke Nicholas photographed on board HMS Marlborough with Yalta disappearing in the distance in April 1919

San Anton Palace in Malta, where Maria Feodorovna resided for a matter of days before continuing her journey to Britain

There were some striking personages on board HMS Marlborough that day. Grand Duke Nicholas had arrived in full military uniform, proud and resplendent. Four generations of Romanovs were on board, a poignant representation of what remained of the once-great family. Not only that, among the passengers was Prince Felix Yusupov, the murderer of Rasputin.

It was an emotional day: the sons of Grand Duchess Xenia had each taken a bag of soil from the Ai Todor estate from the area that held most meaning. And with some hasty adjustments (and grumbling from the Dowager Empress at the taking of the best sleeping spots by Grand Duke Nicholas and his party), the exiles were settled into what was to be their home for the journey.

More refugees making up the remnants of the Russian aristocracy and 200 tonnes of luggage were taken on board British ships at Yalta over the next few days. As promised, HMS Marlborough was the last to depart, setting sail on 11 April. It was not a moment too soon; Yalta became a bloodbath shortly after, those who remained there at the mercy of both Red and White Armies as the town descended into chaos.

The Romanov refugees were mostly stoical about their situation. The Dowager Empress ensconced herself on deck and received company there on a daily basis, while the princes experimented with magic tricks and the children roamed the ship and amused and exasperated the crew. Despite their differences, one thing all the fleeing Romanovs held in common was a great interest in eating, which was hardly surprising after the months of deprivation they'd experienced; meat had been an infrequent luxury, and the memory of coffee made, of necessity, from roasted acorns, was one that would not be quick to fade.

Despite memorial services being held for the Tsar and Grand Duke Michael at Ai-Todor, the Dowager Empress flatly refused to entertain the notion that her sons were dead by the time she embarked on HMS Marlborough. She clung to the belief that they were still alive throughout the voyage. Indeed, it was five years after her voyage on HMS Marlborough that the death of Grand Duke Michael was proven without a doubt, while the remains of the Tsar and his family had still not yet been discovered before her death in 1928, at the age of 80, in Denmark.

One thing that is striking from the accounts is the fondness with which the officers and crew of HMS Marlborough came to view their unlikely passengers. In return, it seems that the Romanovs likewise held the ship's officers in high regard. As an expression of this, Maria Feodorovna, Grand Duke Nicholas and their families were keen not to cause further trouble for their hosts, going out of their way to be polite, courteous, and grateful for every small task or kindness. The friendships made during the voyage did not dissolve when the families left either; many kept in touch, and Pridham not only named his third child Marie after the Dowager whom he held in such esteem, but asked that Maria Feodorovna be the child's godmother. Something else that was remarked upon was how the Romanovs treated the servants that had accompanied them into exile; rather than the haughty, imperious tyrants portrayed across the British press, the exiles were at pains to make sure their retainers had every comfort that could be given to them.

Throughout the voyage, the eventual destination for the fleeing families was uncertain. Malta was mooted as an option, and official, albeit secret, preparations were made in that direction, with telegrams exchanged and instructions given for the governor's house to be readied for the use of the Dowager Empress herself. There were mixed messages, however, as another telegram to the Admiralty intimated that the Dowager and her family were to be taken to England, while the Grand Duke Nicholas and his party were destined for Constantinople before journeying onwards. It was this latter scenario that was to prove correct, and the two parties finally went their separate ways, with the Grand Duke and his relations transferring to HMS Nelson, which would take them on to Genoa, Italy. Grand Duke Nicholas and his party left HMS Marlborough on 16 April and the ship set sail the day after, taking them on their way and leaving the Dowager Empress and her party to continue on alone, effectively ending the feud that they had pursued throughout the length of the voyage.

> "Four generations of Romanovs were on board HMS Marlborough"

Easter – a time of great importance to the Romanovs – was spent on board HMS Marlborough, with gifts swapped between exiles and crew. Gifts were also exchanged on 20 April, their final night on board, and the next day Maria Feodorovna and her party transferred to HMS Nelson to continue to England. This was not to be the Dowager's final residence however, and her time in England with the royal family was to prove short-lived. By August 1919 she was ready to move on, tensions between her and her sister the British queen, along with a dissatisfaction at her decline in status, prompting a move to Denmark, her country of birth. After an equally tumultuous time with her nephew, King Christian, she finally retired to Hvidøre, where she remained until her death several years later.

The remains of the Tsar and his family were finally discovered in 1991 and laid to rest in St Petersburg; the remains of Alexei and the remaining daughter were eventually discovered in 2007. The Russian Church Abroad canonised the murdered Romanovs in 1981, but it was not until 2000 that the Russian Orthodox Church did the same. Nearly a century after the terrible slaughter of the Tsar and his family and the escape of the remaining Romanovs, the question of whether the appalling events of 1918 could have been averted and who could or should have done so, is still not easily answered. But it is to be hoped that the much maligned and venerated family has finally found peace.

Empress Maria Feodorovna's bedroom and study at Hvidøre, her residence in Denmark

ИКОНЫ
и
ИКОНОСТАСЫ
ПРІЕМЪ ЗАКАЗОВЪ
A group of Red Guards resting in the streets of Petrograd, 1917

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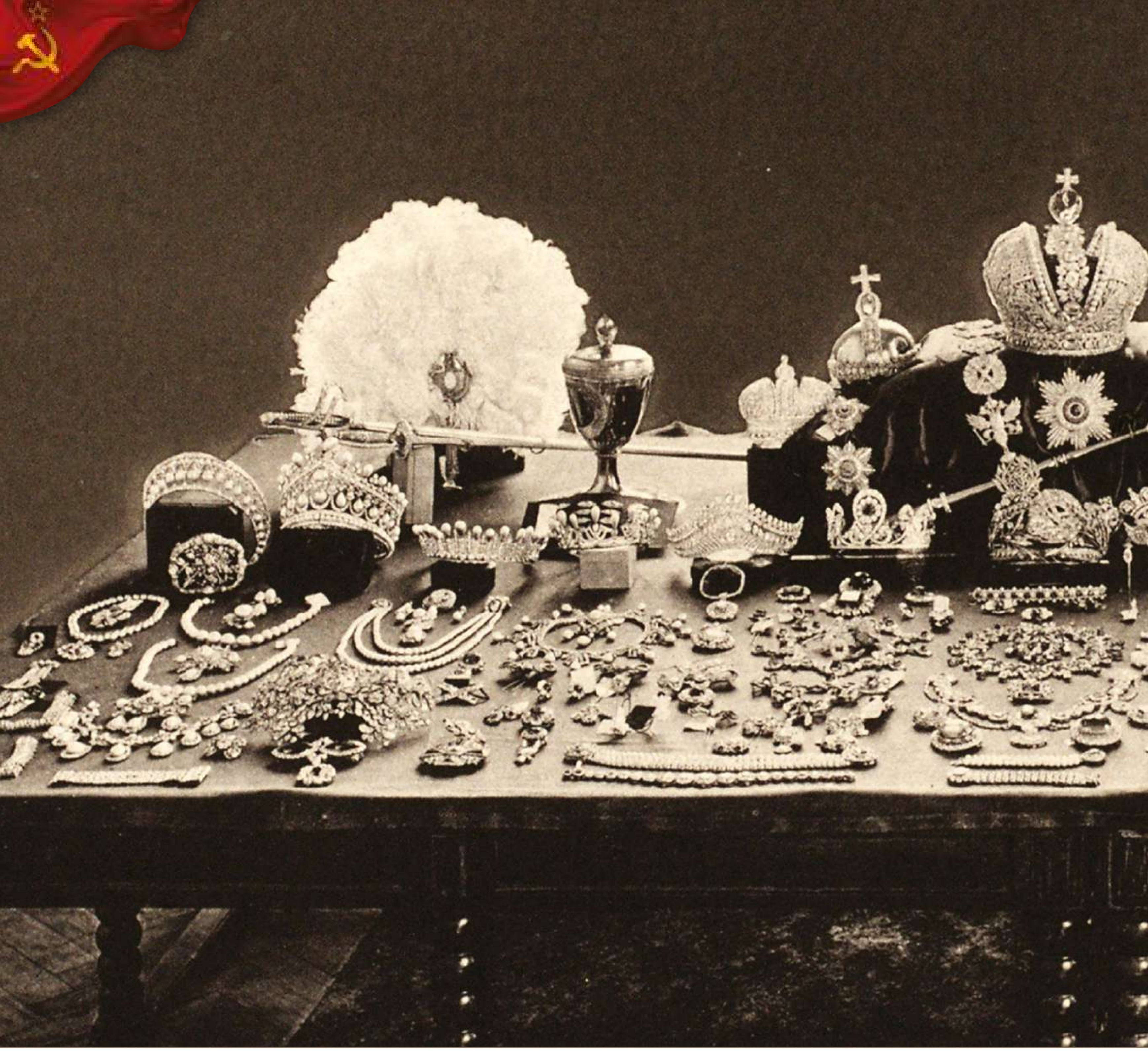
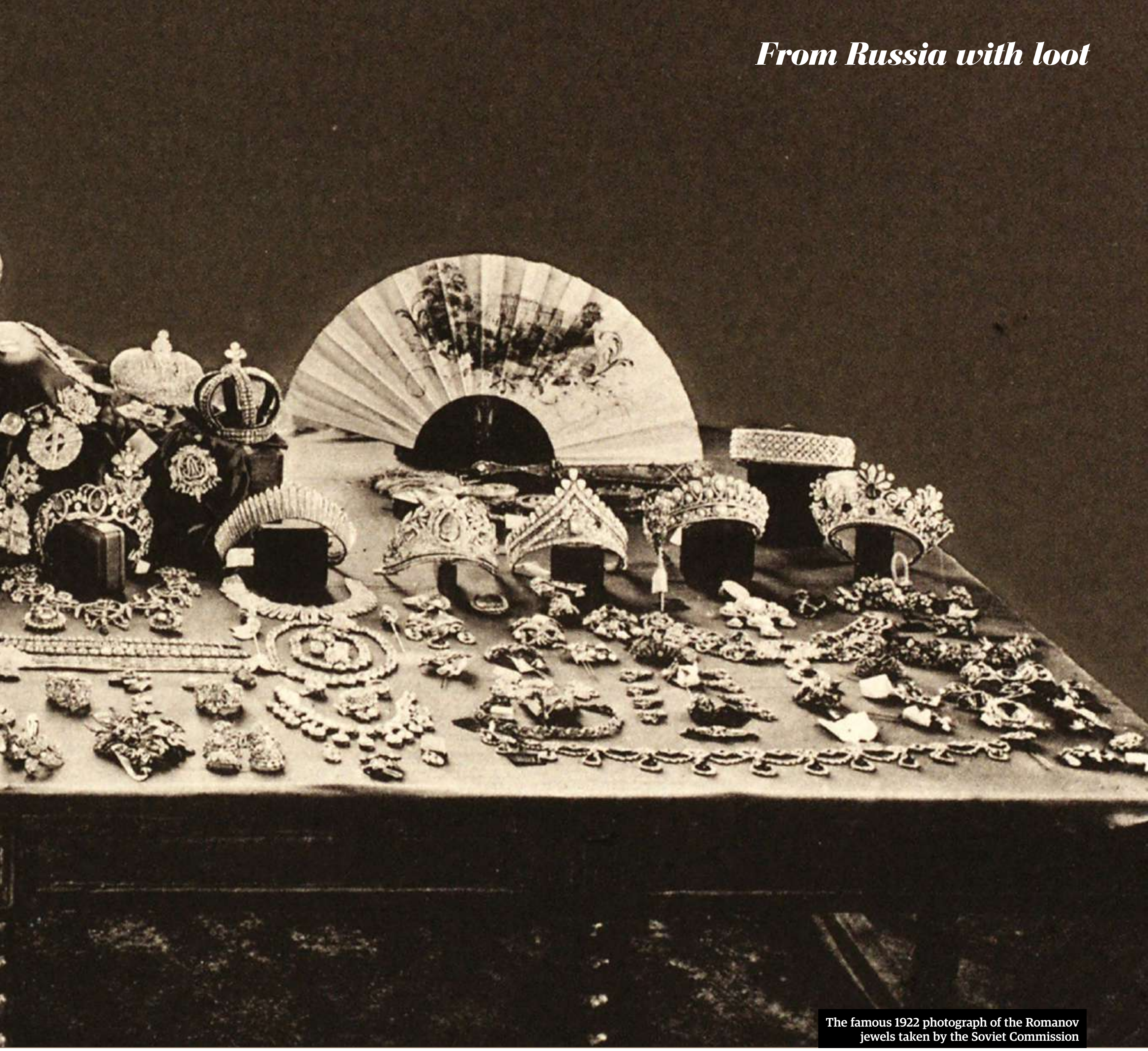


From Russia with loot

The Romanovs were the wealthiest dynasty in the world in 1914, so what happened to their riches after the revolution?



The famous 1922 photograph of the Romanov jewels taken by the Soviet Commission

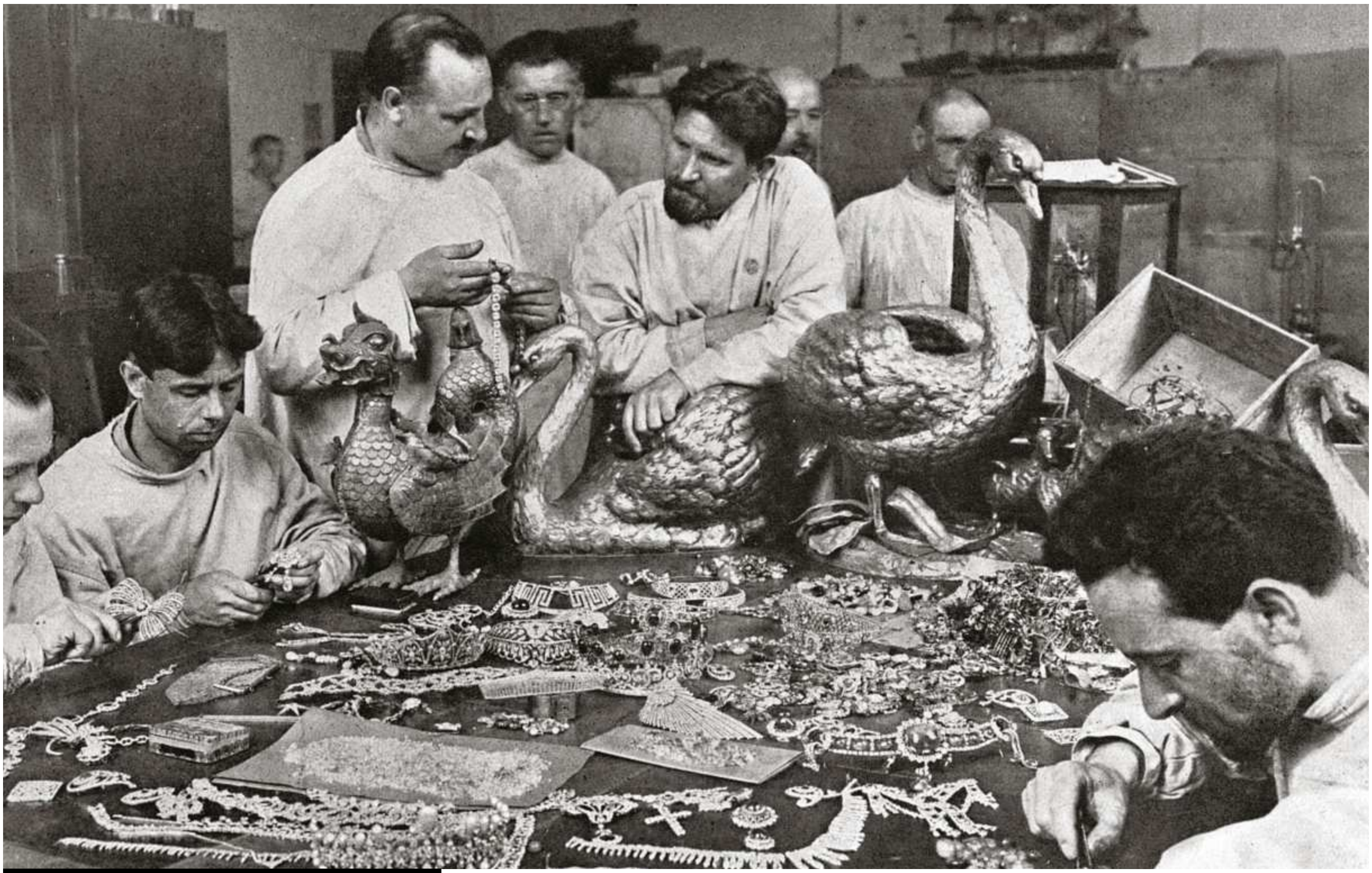
When the last Tsar of Russia, Nicholas II, led his country into WWI in 1914, he was at the head of the wealthiest family in the world. Reigning for 300 years over one-sixth of the earth's surface, the Romanovs had amassed a fortune that would be worth some $280 billion today. Less than four years later, Nicholas and his immediate family would be dead; murdered by the newly instated communist government, and the fabulous treasures they had once owned would be seized by the Bolsheviks. What could be moved was broken apart, weighed, measured and sold - scattered across the world like flotsam from a great shipwreck washed up on shore, all that was left of the greatest ever royal collection on Earth.

Following his abdication on 2 March (OS) / 15 March (NS) 1917, Nicholas was taken to his home at the suburban Alexander Palace as a prisoner; here, he and his family began what would be 481 days of captivity in relative comfort. The family were allowed reasonably good access to living quarters and private gardens, where they passed the time planting vegetables.

The Romanovs - Nicholas, his wife Alexandra and their children Alexei, Olga, Tatiana, Maria and Anastasia - had been hoping to depart Russia for exile in the UK, but their royal cousins, King George V and Queen Mary, refused them refuge, perhaps fearing that the Russians would bring with them the infection of revolution. Alternate foreign exile seemed equally problematic, and the chairman of the post-abdication Provisional Government, Alexander Kerensky, took the decision to send the family into internal exile at a quiet provincial town in Siberia called Tobolsk.

Kerensky knew that his own time in power was running out, much as Nicholas's had done. The Bolshevik party of Vladimir Lenin was gaining strength and power among the disparate factions in a Russia where revolutionary fervour still seethed and threatened - and Lenin was much less well-disposed towards former imperial personages than he was the Provisional Government. Kerensky knew that once Lenin had overthrown the Provisional Government, he would take aim at the Romanovs.

So, in July 1917, the last imperial family gathered in a large, semi-circular hallway in the Alexander



Delegates of the Soviet government carrying out an inventory on the collection of precious objects unearthed at the Palace of Yusupov

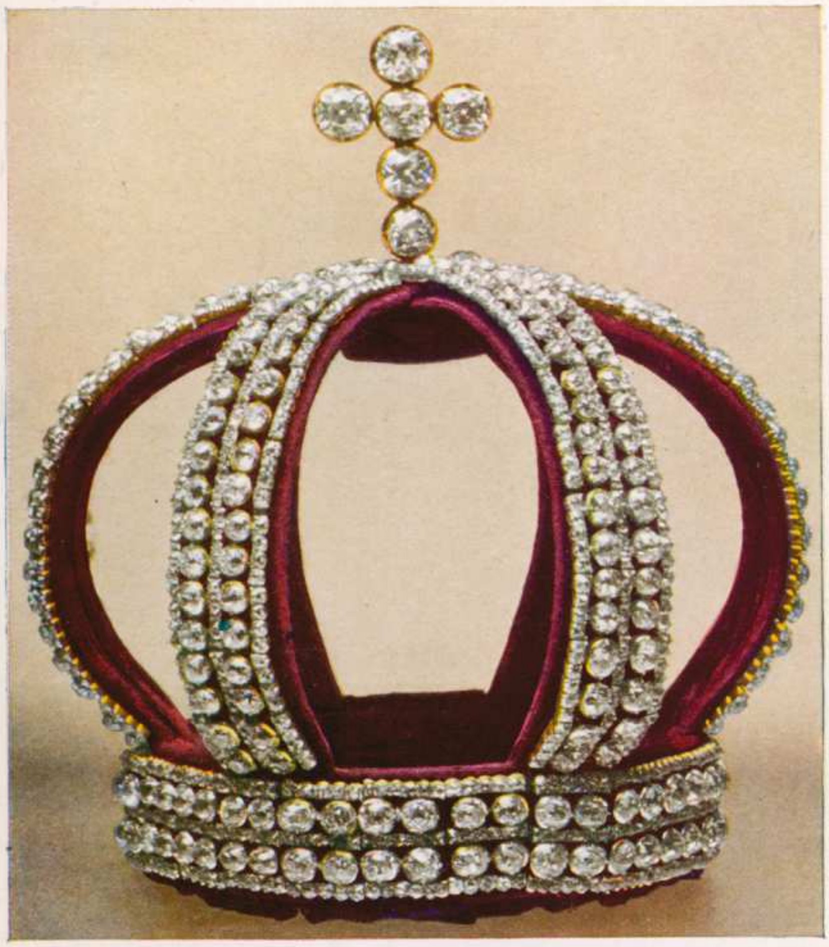
Photo of Vladimir Lenin in 1920

Palace to await the automobiles that would take them the short distance from their home to their private railway station, where they would embark on a train bearing the flags and insignia of the Japanese branch of the Red Cross. They waited in growing anxiety through the night until around 5am, when their cars appeared. They left their house with 42 faithful friends and retainers – many of whom would die for their loyalty – and 50 large packing cases containing clothes, books, household supplies, medications, china and glassware, silver and gold plates and a massive amount of personal jewellery belonging to the former Tsarina and the four young Grand Duchesses, as well as ceremonial swords and court jewellery and trinkets. The children's English tutor, Sidney Gibbes, guessed that the value of the jewellery was well in excess of 1 million roubles. Gibbes's guess was conservative: the value of the treasure taken east into exile by the Romanov family totalled 2,878,930 roubles in value in 1917 (in 2018, that's roughly about £14,772,869 or $18,466,086).

Despite the staggering amount of treasure that the imperial family took into exile in their luggage, they also left behind an incredible wealth in palaces, furniture, works of art and even more jewels and jewellery.

During his reign, Peter the Great had established the Diamond Fund, which was a dedicated collection of crowns, sceptres, orbs, diadems, tiaras, necklaces, bracelets and other adornments intended to belong to the Romanov dynasty in perpetuity and forbidden to be sold, given away or altered. Additionally, each succeeding Emperor or Empress was expected to add to the fund, which meant that by the time of World War I, there was an almost incalculable wealth of the jeweller's art in the Diamond Fund, including examples in various styles such as Rococo and Neo-Gothic, as well as several famous stones like Caesar's Ruby and a piece believed to have been cut from the legendary Hope Diamond. These imperial treasures were stored in a safe room in the Winter Palace, but as a precautionary measure, the entire Diamond Fund was ordered to be removed, and was sent by train to Moscow, where it was installed in vaults beneath the Kremlin for safe keeping for the duration of the war.

There it stayed until 1926, when the cache was discovered by the Bolsheviks. The collection was taken out, cleaned, photographed and catalogued before being divided up. Part of the collection – the larger, more historically and nationally significant pieces including the coronation regalia – were kept in the Kremlin, where they finally went on display in 1967. They remain there today, and can be seen by visitors to the Armoury Museum and the Diamond Fund.



The Nuptial Crown of the Romanov dynasty was one of the treasures sold at auction

The other part of the Diamond Fund, which amounted to almost 70 per cent of the collection, was allocated for sale. Through a consortium of British dealers, most of these items were sold at auction at Christie's. They were offered in 124 lots on 16 March 1927, but each lot may have included pairs or sets of items. A sword with a hilt and guard entirely encrusted with brilliants and previously belonging to Emperor Paul was auctioned, and so was a diamond tiara in the form of wheat-sheafs with foliage, which had once been a favourite of Paul's wife and which was donated to the Fund at the time of her death. The whereabouts of many of these items is unknown, but we do know where some of them are, and among the latter is the Romanov Nuptial Crown.

> "The value of the treasure taken east into exile totalled about 2.8 million roubles in 1917"

The Nuptial Crown had been fashioned out of approximately 1,500 old-mine diamonds that had once adorned the clothing of Catherine the Great. The diamonds were set in double rows on red velvet, surrounded with smaller brilliants and surmounted by a cross that was made from six large stones. The crown is of uncertain craftsmanship, but is believed to have been made in the early 1840s by Nichols and Plinkle, a Saint Petersburg jeweller and holder of a Royal Warrant. The tradition of this crown is that every imperial bride wore it, whether marrying into or out of the House of Romanov. It was bought at the Christie's auction by Marjorie Merriweather Post, and it can be seen today at Hillwood, the former Post house and now a museum, in Washington, DC.

The Diamond Fund was a treasure trove that fell into the hands of the communist government almost as an afterthought in 1926. But in the immediate aftermath of the Russian Revolution in October 1917, the collections of treasure most vulnerable to Bolshevik looting were those of the extended imperial family, who left huge numbers of valuable items behind them in their palaces as they ran for their lives. Several members of the family were not resident in Saint Petersburg during the October Revolution, and among these was Nicholas's mother, the Dowager Empress Maria, who had been living in a palace in Kiev when it became obvious that she could not return to her homes in and around Saint Petersburg, the Anichkov and Gatchina Palaces. All of her property inside these palaces was seized by the Petrograd Soviet and photographed and inventoried.

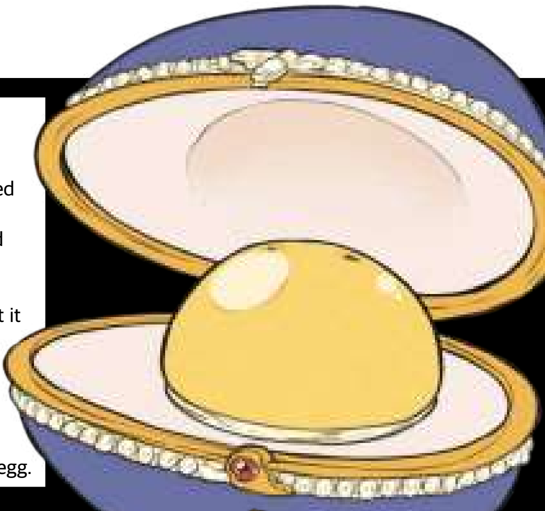
Empress Maria herself left Russia from the Crimea in 1919 aboard a British warship, HMS Marlborough. A sister of the British Queen Alexandra, Maria spent the rest of her life at home in Denmark, or visiting Alexandra in England. When she died in Copenhagen in 1928, Maria left a final collection of personal treasure in a jewellery box that she kept next to her bed. This box was brought to London, where its contents were appraised by the jeweller Hennells and valued at the amount of £155,000 (in 2018, about £880,000 or $1.1 million) before being returned to the Empress's two daughters, Grand Duchesses Xenia and Olga. At this time, Britain's Queen Mary bought only four items from the Grand Duchesses, and – contrary to rumour – she paid fair market value. Over time, the queen added more items to her collection, but she always paid appropriate amounts to Xenia and Olga.

Empress Marie's granddaughter – and Nicholas's only niece – Princess Irina of Russia, was married to the wealthiest noble in Russia, Prince Felix Yusupov. Following the October Revolution, the intrepid prince made a foolhardy raid on his own house, the Yusupov Palace on the Moika Canal in Saint Petersburg, and managed to escape with two

The lost imperial Fabergé eggs

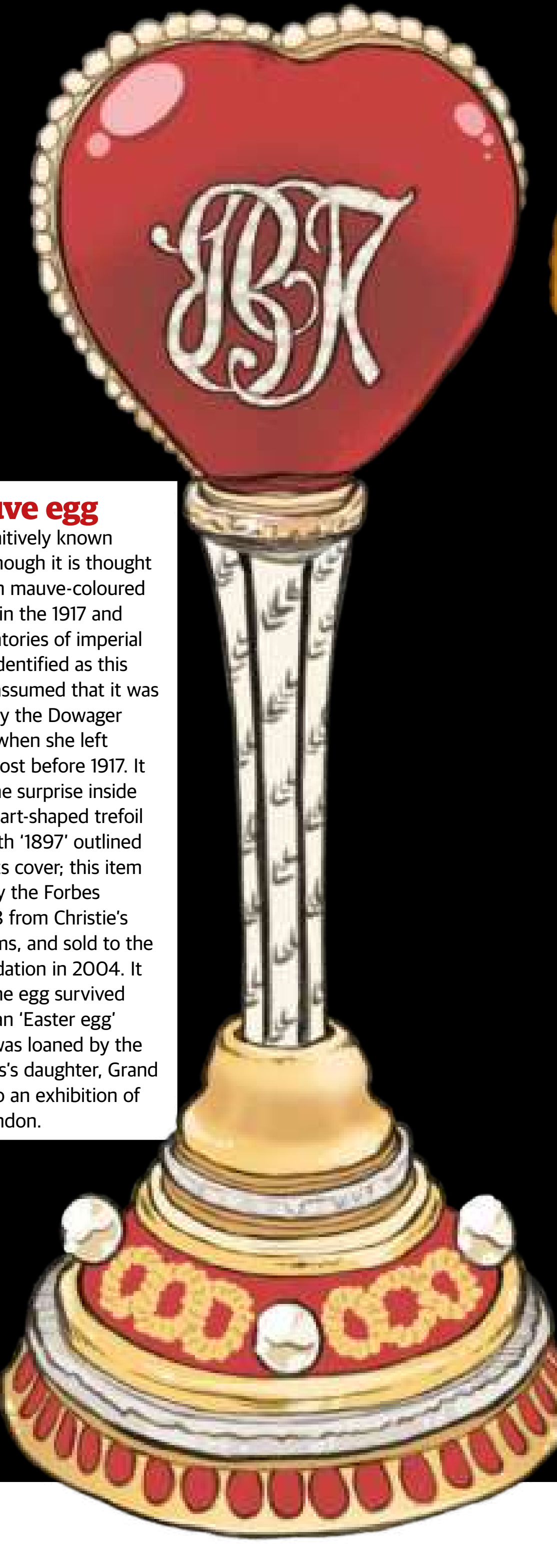
Somewhere across the world, seven are waiting to be found

There are few collections of art so associated with a dynasty as the traditionally gifted imperial Fabergé eggs of the Romanovs. Of the 50 completed eggs, the whereabouts of 43 are known, though some went missing for years at a time. Seven imperial eggs are missing. Most of them are from the early years of the series; possibly, as their designs are much simpler than the later eggs, they may not have received the same attention as the more elaborate and decorative eggs, and may have been sold on as mere trinkets. All seven of the missing eggs are from the collection of the Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna.



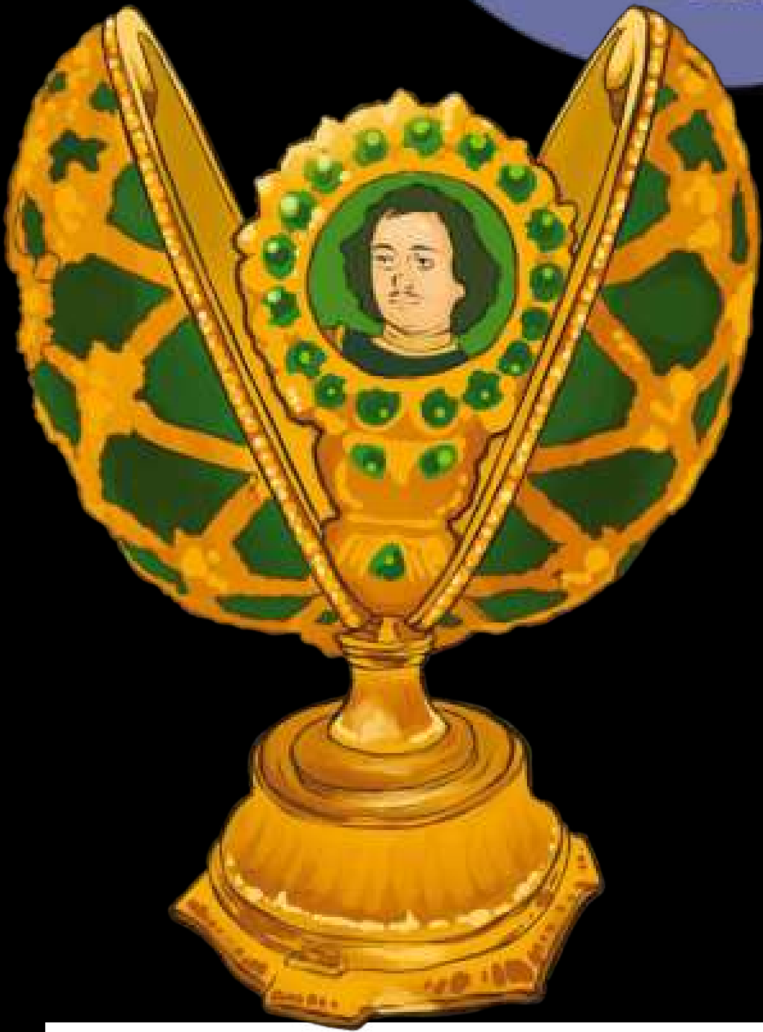
1886: Hen egg with sapphire pendant

This object is described as a hen, dotted with rose-cut diamonds, picking a sapphire egg pendant out of a jewelled basket. As a gift from her husband, Alexander III, no doubt Tsarina Maria treasured this egg, and it is known that it survived the Revolution. In 1922, an object described as "one silver hen, speckled with rose-cut diamonds, on gold stand" was taken to the Sovnarkom salesrooms. It is possible that this is the hen separated from its egg.



1897: Mauve egg

Very little is definitively known about this egg, though it is thought to be of gold with mauve-coloured enamel. No item in the 1917 and 1922 Soviet inventories of imperial treasure can be identified as this egg, and so it is assumed that it was either removed by the Dowager Empress herself when she left Russia, or it was lost before 1917. It is thought that the surprise inside this egg was a heart-shaped trefoil portrait frame with '1897' outlined in diamonds on its cover; this item was purchased by the Forbes Collection in 1978 from Christie's Geneva salesrooms, and sold to the Vekelsberg Foundation in 2004. It is possible that the egg survived into 1935, when an 'Easter egg' with miniatures was loaned by the Dowager Empress's daughter, Grand Duchess Xenia, to an exhibition of Russian art in London.

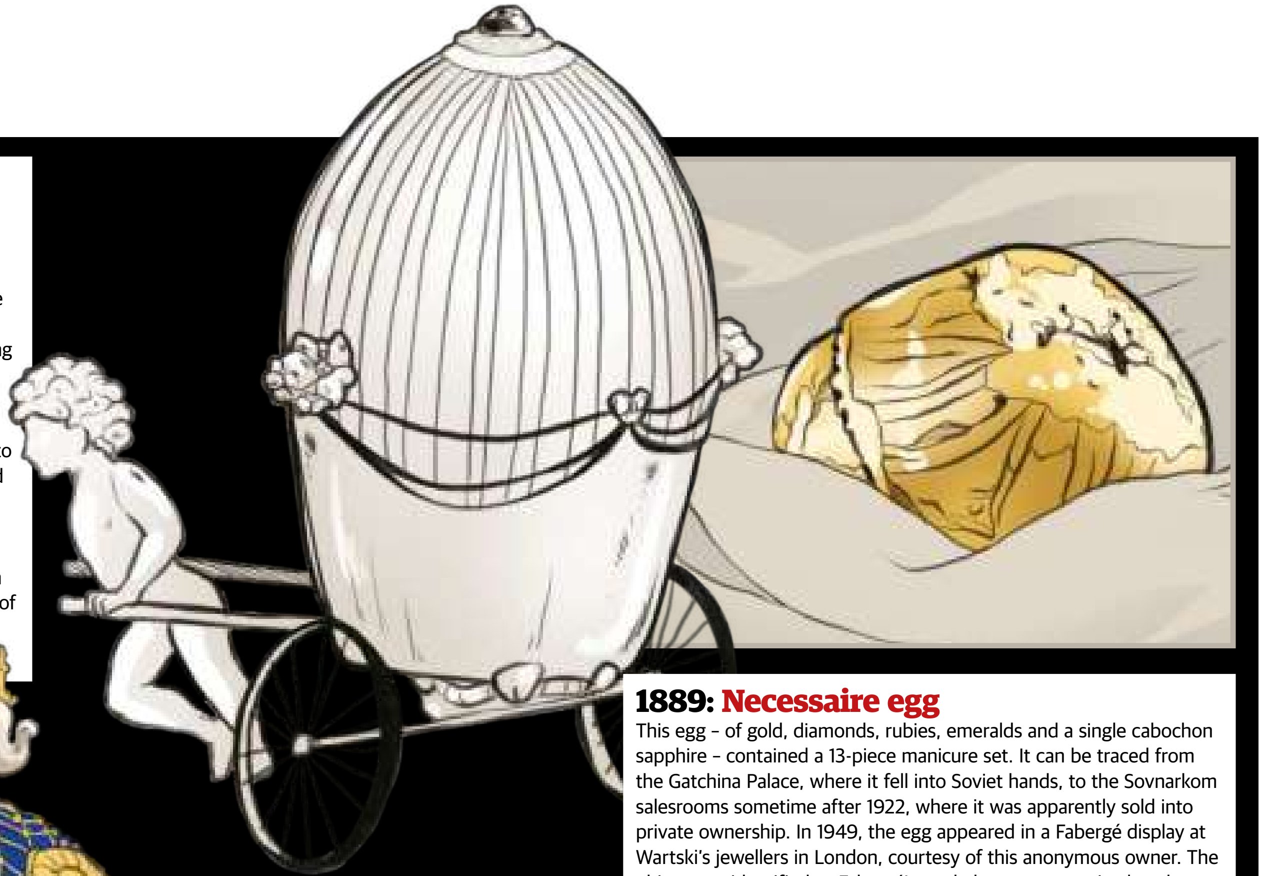


1902: Empire nephrite egg

Even less is known about this egg than the mauve egg. It is though to have been made in the Empire style, and to have been composed of gold, diamonds, nephrite and either ivory or mother of pearl. The surprise is also unidentified, though it seems possible that a miniature portrait of Alexander III, framed in nephrite, and in the possession of the Dowager Empress's daughter, Grand Duchess Xenia, in the 1950s is a good candidate. A sensational 2004 publication suggests that the egg may have been found, but although the claim was supported and its presentation edited by Fabergé expert Alexander von Solodkoff, the majority of Fabergé scholars remain unconvinced. A more recent piece of news that may reference this egg is the 2015 discovery of an inventory drawn up by the Dowager Empress's staff in 1917 of her personal items stored at Gatchina Palace. This list mentions an egg "in gold mount on two columns from nephrite" containing inside miniature portraits of her daughter Grand Duchess Olga and the Grand Duchess's first husband, Prince Peter of Oldenburg.

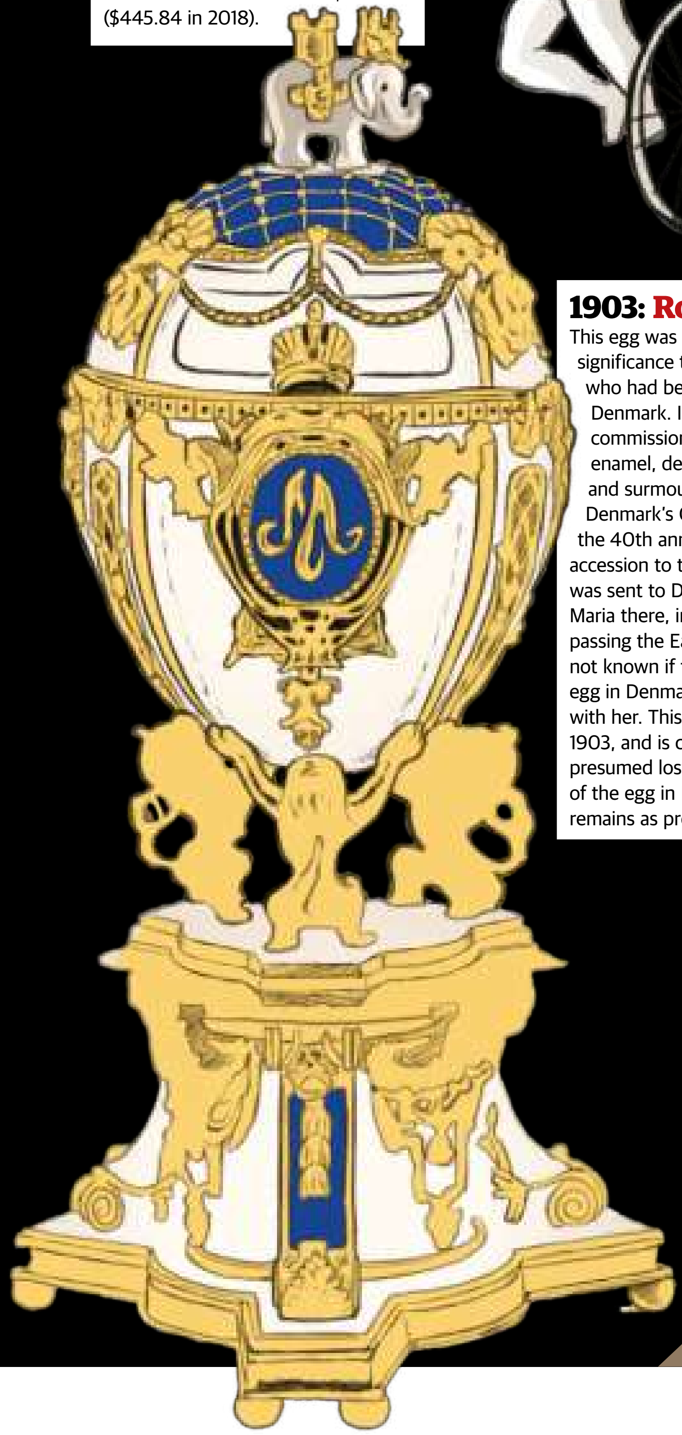
1888: Cherub with chariot egg

This creation is a small, silver egg placed in a silver chariot with a silver Cupid figure set between the shafts. There is one known semi-photograph of this egg; a tantalising glimpse of the missing object reflected in the glass of a vitrine at a Saint Petersburg exposition in 1902. It almost certainly was sold to Armand Hammer in the 1930s, and was sold on to a Mrs Ethel Gunton Douglas in New York in 1934. The egg was sold by Mrs Douglas's estate through an auction house in 1941 to an unknown buyer as part of a lot of two silver items for $22.50 ($445.84 in 2018).



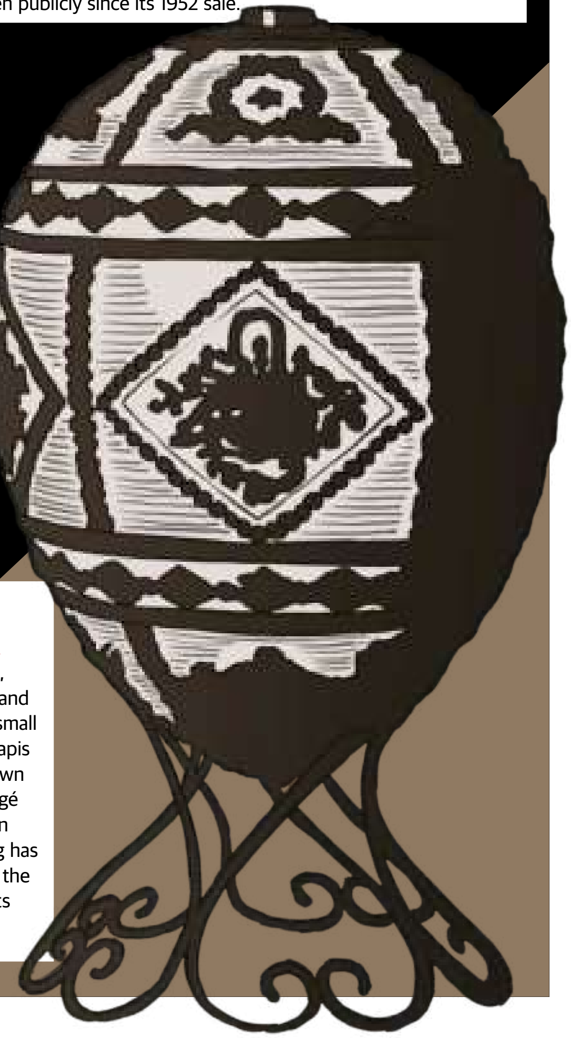
1889: Necessaire egg

This egg – of gold, diamonds, rubies, emeralds and a single cabochon sapphire – contained a 13-piece manicure set. It can be traced from the Gatchina Palace, where it fell into Soviet hands, to the Sovnarkom salesrooms sometime after 1922, where it was apparently sold into private ownership. In 1949, the egg appeared in a Fabergé display at Wartski's jewellers in London, courtesy of this anonymous owner. The object was identified as Fabergé's work, but not recognised as the missing 1889 egg. In 1952, Wartski bought this egg – still unidentified – from its anonymous owner and sold it on to another buyer who wished to remain unnamed. Wartski honoured this wish, and the new owner's name was not entered into the sales ledger. This egg has not been seen publicly since its 1952 sale.



1903: Royal Danish egg

This egg was probably of particular significance to the Dowager Empress, who had been born a princess of Denmark. It is believed that the egg was commissioned in pale blue and white enamel, decorated in gold and jewels and surmounted with the symbol of Denmark's Order of the Elephant to mark the 40th anniversary of Maria's father's accession to the Danish throne. The egg was sent to Denmark and presented to Maria there, in Copenhagen, where she was passing the Easter holidays that year. It is not known if the Dowager Empress left the egg in Denmark, or if it returned to Russia with her. This egg has not been seen since 1903, and is considered to be missing, presumed lost. A single, good photograph of the egg in Fabergé's workshop is all that remains as proof it existed.



1909: Alexander III commemorative egg

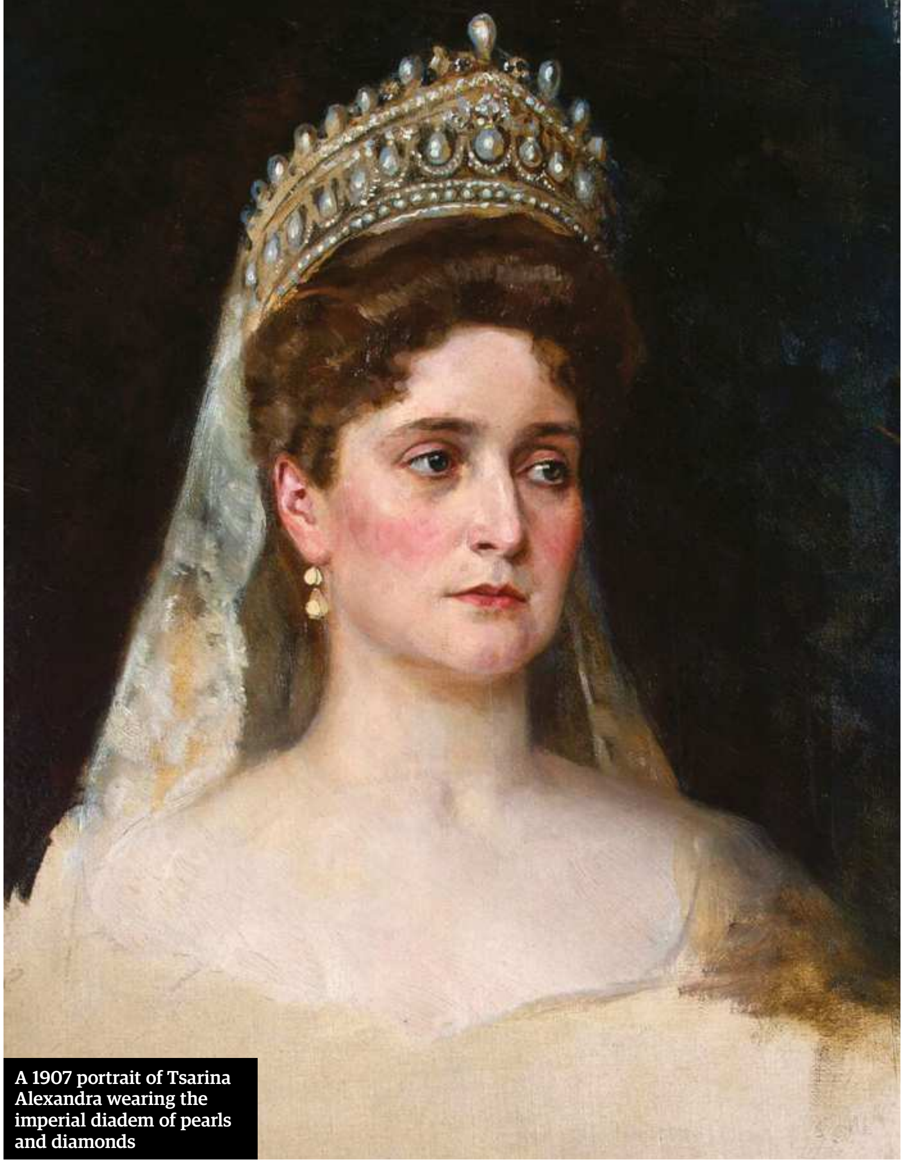
This egg was created from platinum, gold, white matte enamel, rose-cut and portrait diamonds and contained a small gold bust of Alexander III, set on a lapis lazuli pedestal. There is a single known photograph of it, taken in the Fabergé workshop, though there is no known photograph of the surprise. This egg has not been seen publicly since before the 1917 Revolution, and neither it nor its surprise has been located.

> "The intrepid prince made a foolhardy raid on his own house and managed to escape with two Rembrandts"

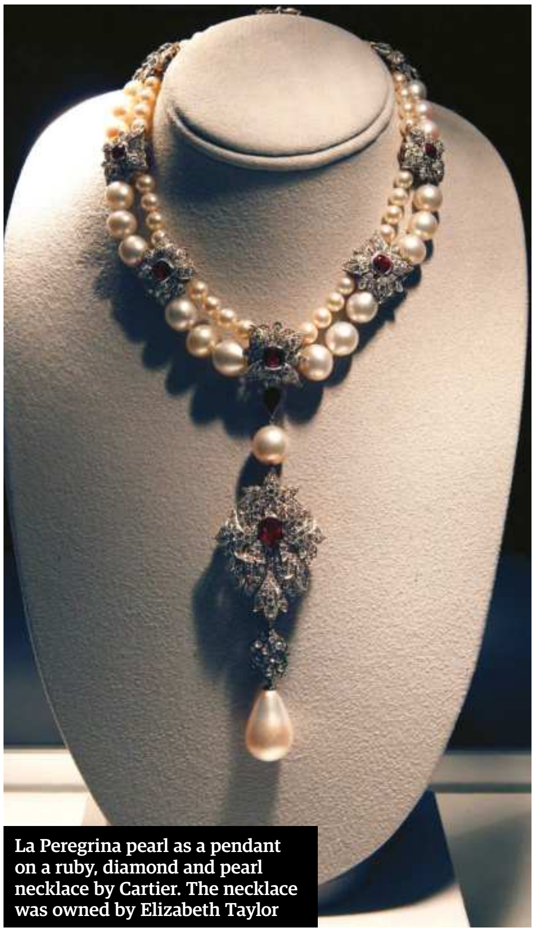
Rembrandts that he had cut out of their frames, and pockets stuffed full of loose gems and smaller pieces of jewellery. Felix's mother, legendary beauty Princess Zenaida, escaped from Russia with many of her jewels, including the 203.84 grain pearl known as La Peregrina. Following Zenaida's death in 1939, La Peregrina was sold to a Geneva jeweller. From there, the pearl was purchased by the actor Richard Burton and given to his wife Elizabeth Taylor. Taylor had La Peregrina set as a drop in a pearl-and-ruby necklace by Cartier. This necklace, and La Peregrina, is still believed to remain in Taylor's estate.

The palaces and bank vaults of other imperial family relatives were seized as quickly as could be accomplished and inventories were made by the Bolsheviks, who saw the valuables within as a source of cash that could then be used to launch the new Soviet government's plan of industrialisation. But the Soviet itself was not without those who chose to benefit personally from the seizure of Romanov wealth. Lenin himself requisitioned one of the former emperor's automobiles, a lavish Delaunay-Belleville limousine, in which he had himself driven around Saint Petersburg. This act of looting must have happened very shortly after the October Revolution and was soon surpassed by a more audacious act of robbery when one day Lenin was car-jacked on the streets of the city and found himself having to walk back to the Duma building. Thereafter, he confined himself to a more common Rolls-Royce limo.

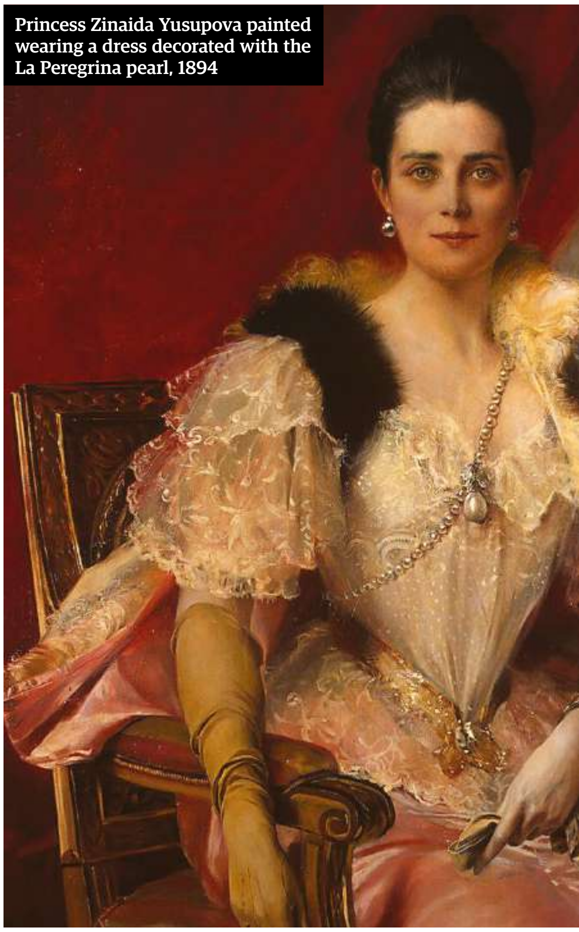
The requisitioned and inventoried treasure was eventually organised for sale by the Soviets in salesrooms set up in Moscow, where interested foreigners were encouraged to purchase the art of a fallen imperial culture. The salesrooms were forbidden to Russians, and only hard-currency sales were permitted. Many pieces were bought by American businessman Armand Hammer, who kept some pieces for his own art collection, but who also made many more pieces available through department stores in New York City. This became a valuable source of income for the nascent Soviet government, and via this route, a number of pieces of Romanov treasure disappeared into the households and private collections of unknown and – at this distance of time – probably unidentifiable individuals. Armand Hammer is today one of the best-known 20th-century collectors of Russian art.



A 1907 portrait of Tsarina Alexandra wearing the imperial diadem of pearls and diamonds



La Peregrina pearl as a pendant on a ruby, diamond and pearl necklace by Cartier. The necklace was owned by Elizabeth Taylor



Princess Zinaida Yusupova painted wearing a dress decorated with the La Peregrina pearl, 1894

The imperial diadem, made of pearls and diamonds, was acquired in the early 19th century

Elizabeth Taylor wearing her famous necklace featuring the infamous La Peregrina pearl as a pendant

Another well-known collector of Russian art was Marjorie Merriweather Post. The heiress of the Postum Cereal fortune, Post was married to an American diplomat called Joseph E Davis, who was the United States ambassador to the Soviet Union for 18 months from 1936 to 1938. During her time in Moscow, Mrs Davis was invited to visit the Soviet salesrooms. They had largely all been picked clean by the time she made her first visit, but she still managed to find several stunning pieces, as well as large amounts of tarnished silver and pewter - which she was able to buy by weight, bring home and polish up. All of these items, together with her purchases from the 1927 Christie's sale in London, can be visited today at her former home Hillwood.

If Hammer and Post were in the first generation of collectors of requisitioned imperial and Romanov jewellery and art, then Malcolm Forbes may be said to be in the forefront of the second generation, together with several institutions such as the Virginia Museum of Fine Art. Malcolm Forbes built an impressive collection of former imperial possessions, including nine Fabergé eggs that had been created for the Tsarinas Marie and Alexandra. In 2004, 13 years after the fall of the Soviet Union, events began to come full circle as the Russian industrialist Viktor Vekelsberg began buying collections of imperial art - including the Forbes Collection - and returning them to Russia. This repatriation of Russian cultural pieces is admirable, but can never really be complete, given that many of the pieces have been sold and re-sold the length and breadth of the world, and many have been lost or forgotten in the meantime.

In July 1918, the Red guards selected as the execution squad for the Romanovs had the unnerving experience of seeing their carefully aimed bullets literally bounce off the torsos of the young Grand Duchesses, who screamed as they ran back and forth across the basement murder room. After their first attempts failed, the guards retreated to the outside corridor to regroup and to discuss what on Earth - or from Heaven - was happening with what should have been a straightforward execution by shooting. Nicholas, Alexandra, the family doctor and two servants had been dispensed with relatively cleanly, but the five children and the maid seemed impervious to the rain of bullets.

Fortifying themselves with alcohol - and some no doubt secretly resorting to prayer - the executioners entered the room armed with bayonets and revolvers. This time, there was no reprieve, and soon all 11 members of the last Romanov household lay dead or dying on the floor.

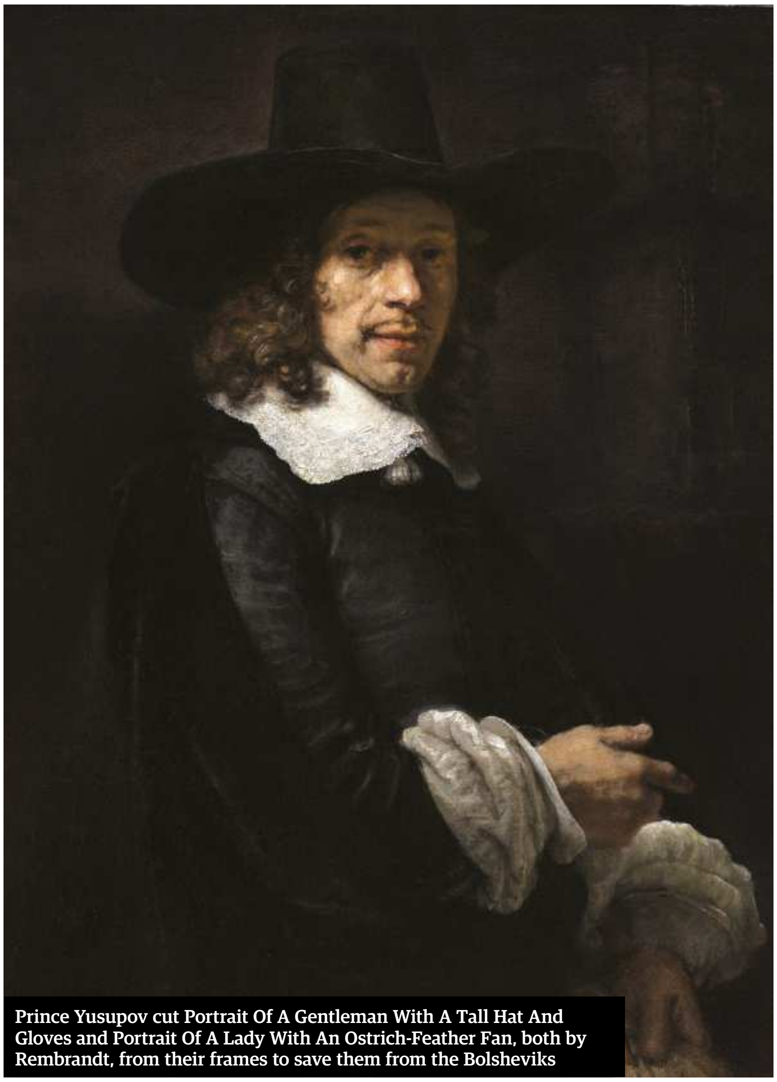
Then, as the guards moved around the room, positioning the bodies to be stretchered out to the waiting stake-bed pick-up truck that would carry the deceased family to their gravesites, they noticed gashes and slashes in the clothing of the young women. Gleaming through these holes, they could see the brightly coloured precious stones, pearls and gold of the remaining Romanov treasure. Undoubtedly intended to finance a new life in another country – or to buy their way out of peril – the valuable jewels had been sewn into the corsets and undergarments of the Grand Duchesses and Alexei and had served as bulletproof vests, an unexpected side-effect and a literal demonstration of the jewels' ability to protect the lives of the young Romanovs.

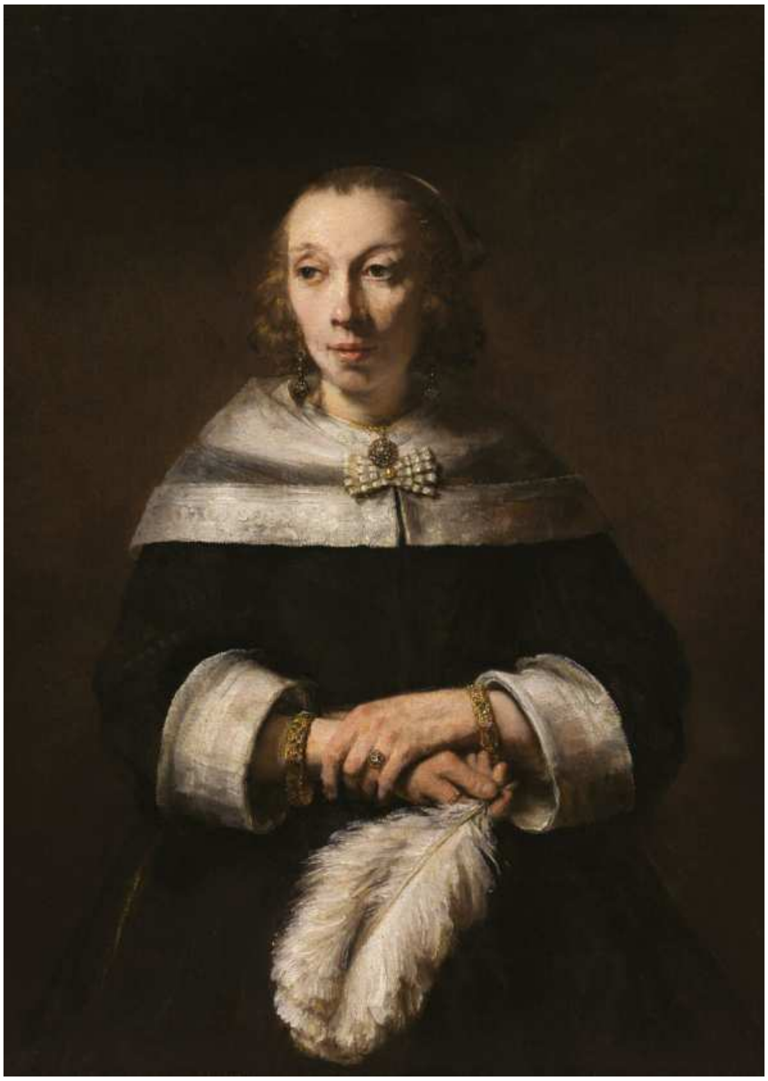
Some 17 pounds in weight of jewellery – loose stones, necklaces, gold wire, bracelets and earrings – were recovered and returned to Moscow by the local Soviet. These jewels represented a fraction of the total jewellery and valuables the imperial family took into exile. As the Romanovs were kept in confinement in the Governor's House in Tobolsk, they could not help but be aware that their wellbeing was at the centre of several probably nefarious plans to extract money and wealth from the supply line that radiated out from friends in Moscow and Saint Petersburg to the family in Siberia. In order to safeguard the majority of their remaining fortune, 197 items of extreme literal and historical value were smuggled out of the Governor's House, carried by faithful friends and retainers and distributed among the Romanov faithful in the townsfolk. They even supplied Rasputin's daughter with jewels to fund her escape.

In 1933, Stalin turned his attention to the lost Romanov valuables and sent the NKVD (successors of the tsarist Cheka and precursors of the KGB) to conduct an investigation among Tobolsk's townspeople and the former members of the Romanov household there, some of whom had not left Russia, and who were living all across the country. The investigation was a short and brutal one. Several people, including one of the imperial children's teachers, Klaudia Bittner Kobylinsky, were arrested and shot in retaliation for loyalty to the dead Romanovs. In the end, 154 of the hidden items were recovered from various hiding places inside walls and wells, and were exhumed from backyard holes. These items were returned by the NKVD agents to Moscow where a few would remain in the Kremlin Armoury, but many were directed to the salesrooms to raise money for the state.

There is no doubt that Soviet policy sacrificed Russia's cultural and artistic heritage in order to finance its planned industrialisation; but the extent of this policy is occasionally extraordinary. In 1891, the 21-year-old Grand Duchess Alexandra Georgievna, born a Princess of Greece and married to the Russian Grand Duke Paul Alexandrovich, died in childbirth. The young woman was buried in accordance with imperial tradition in the Peter and Paul Fortress in Saint Petersburg. In 1939, the then-King of Greece, Alexandra's nephew, approached the Soviet Government for permission to repatriate his aunt's body in accordance with her mother's last wishes. Stalin agreed that the exhumation and repatriation could only take place, allegedly, in exchange for a certain number of tractors. Yet again the Romanovs, ironically, ended up funding the Revolution that deposed and killed them.

> "The valuable jewels sewn into the corsets and undergarments of the Grand Duchesses and Alexei had served as bulletproof vests"





Prince Yusupov cut Portrait Of A Gentleman With A Tall Hat And Gloves and Portrait Of A Lady With An Ostrich-Feather Fan, both by Rembrandt, from their frames to save them from the Bolsheviks

Making millions

How Lenin sold treasure for tractors

In the early 1920s, the Bolshevik government looted churches, palaces, museums and bank safe deposit boxes across Russia. They amassed an incredible amount of material wealth, which also largely represented Russia's cultural patrimony. But after the costly years of WWI and the Russian Civil War, Russia was in bad shape and its population had been depleted of landowners, business owners and its traditional leadership, the nobility. Lenin knew he would have to rebuild the country from the ground up, and so his government determined that one course of action would be to sell the looted jewels, paintings and other valuables and use the proceeds to purchase farming equipment. But by the time the party had completed a study of the loot, separating out what would be kept back and cataloguing what would be offered for sale, the art market had hit a worldwide slump and the Soviets found out that their valuables would not sell for the amount they wanted.

An article in the *Atlanta Constitution* from 24 July 1929 reported on a delegation of American businessmen and wealthy collectors unofficially visiting Russia to purchase art and jewellery. The story ran, "Although members of the group purchased many thousands of dollars worth of paintings and other art objects from the Soviet Government, they came to one place where even American wealth was powerless." What the Americans were unable to buy was a selection from the Russian Diamond Fund, the least expensive piece of which was for sale for $1 million, and the 190-carat Orloff Diamond, which the article stated the Soviets wanted "to convert into plough shares, locomotives and tractors."

The price slumps in the markets had been created by the collapse of three European empires at the end of WWI, in which, of course, the Bolsheviks had played their part. It is estimated that in the three years following WWI some $80 million worth of family jewellery and artistic wealth had been sold to French jewellers alone by the displaced nobility of Russia, Germany and Austria-Hungary. Several sales did take place, however, with Western financiers like Andrew Mellon, the United States secretary of the treasury from 1921 to 1932. While publicly supporting trade sanctions and embargoes between the United States and the Soviet Union, Mellon saw no issue with purchasing no fewer than 25 masterpieces from the Hermitage Museum, offered to him by the Soviets in a private sale.

If the Soviets found a buyer in Mellon, in others, such as American capitalist Armand Hammer, they found someone willing to assist in facilitating sales to others in the States. Hammer was, for several years, a valuable conduit of imperial and Diamond Fund items from Russia to the showrooms of various department stores in New York City. In return, Hammer was able to fatten his own art collections at cut prices.

This brought in some much-needed revenue, but largely the Diamond Fund transactions and sales of other valuables in the 1920s and 1930s were not major sources of income and the plan was ultimately a failure. There was little financial value gained, and so the sales made no real economic sense. But as far as Russia's cultural patrimony goes, all the early Soviet plans served to do was to scatter a large amount of jewellery and art across the globe to unknown and unknowable new owners.

In the end, considering that in the first years of power Lenin brokered a deal with the British government that allowed him to buy some of the most advanced aeroplane engines of the time from Rolls Royce, it would be appropriate to ask just how cash-strapped the Soviets were. The money raised through jewellery and art sales is not estimated to have been much more than a drop in the ocean, and probably only a fraction of the real value of the items sold. Lenin, however, knew how to make a deal, and as a sweetener, Rolls Royce offered a 15 per cent discount on one of their automobiles – which Lenin happily snapped up.

> "In the three years following the First World War some $80 million worth of family jewellery and artistic wealth had been sold to French jewellers alone"

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The Russian Civil War

The Bolshevik Red Army prevailed against the rival White forces in the Russian Civil War amid social and economic upheaval, foreign intervention, famine and terror

From the moment that the Bolsheviks executed a coup d'etat, deposing the provisional government of Russia and seizing power during the October Revolution of 1917, the country was in chaos. Embroiled in World War I and with hostile German troops pressing eastward, the Bolsheviks intended to move quickly to extricate their country from the war.

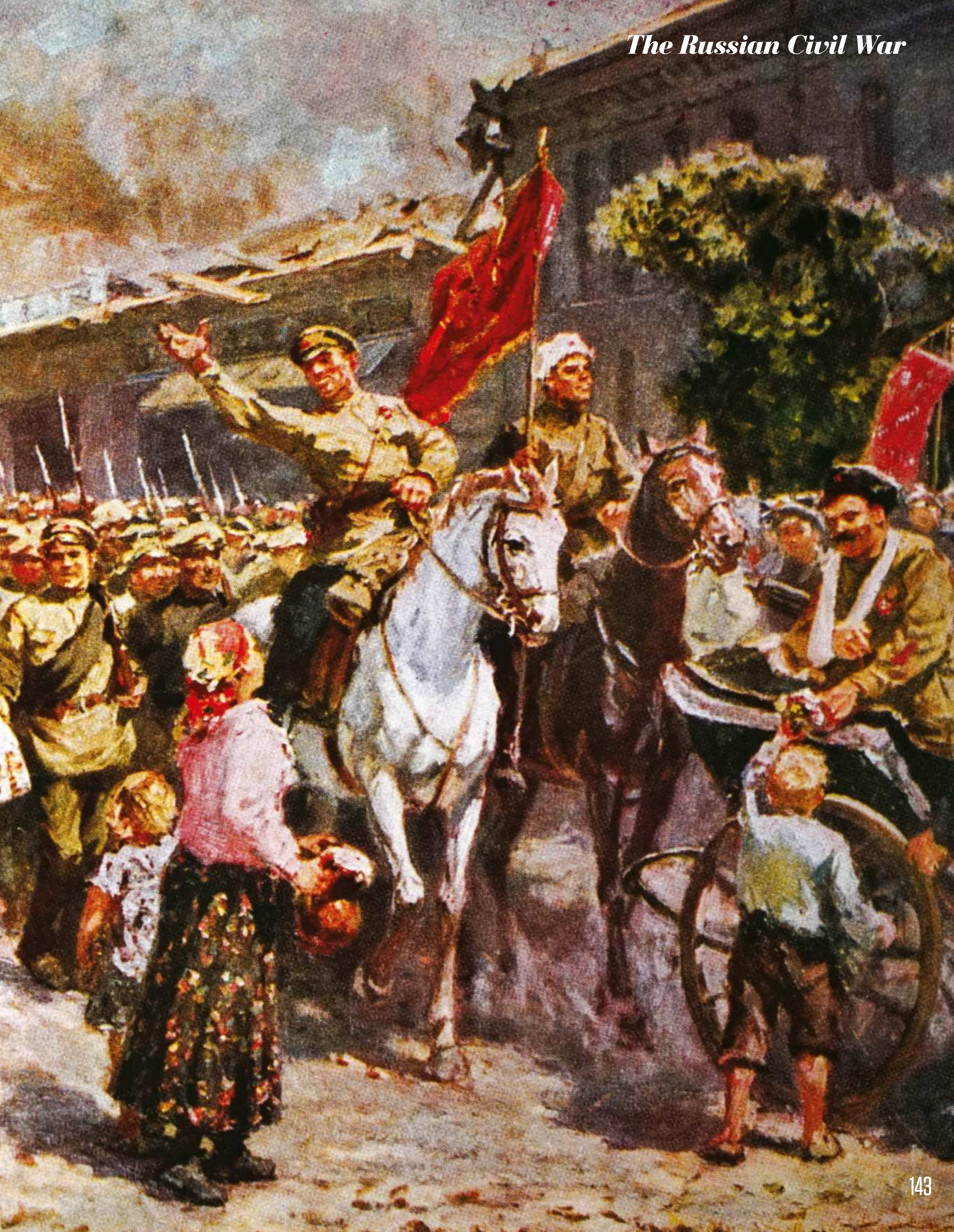
However, dealing with the Germans and the other Central Powers was only one of many major issues that confronted Lenin and his cadre of Bolshevik leaders. Elections to the Constituent Assembly were held soon after the October Revolution. The Bolsheviks gained only 168 of 703 seats. Still, the revolutionaries had no desire to share power. When the Constituent Assembly convened in January 1918, sailors loyal to the Bolsheviks broke up the meeting at gunpoint. The Communist Party, as the Bolsheviks were officially renamed, would come to rule the country. However, actual control appeared out of reach to many of the observers at the time.

Negotiations with Germany went nowhere in the beginning, and the impatient Germans launched Operation Faustschlag, an offensive that appeared unstoppable and compelled Lenin to relocate the Russian capital from Petrograd to Moscow. The renewed German threat jolted the Bolsheviks, who signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on 3 March 1918. Lenin was willing to cede vast territory in western Russia to Germany in exchange for Russia's exit from the disaster of World War I. It is important to remember, though, that Lenin believed the terms of the treaty were only temporary. He was convinced that the Revolution in Russia would ignite a worldwide revolution of the proletariat and that such an uprising was imminent in Germany. He was mistaken on both counts.

Inward focus

Once the immediate crisis with Germany had passed, the Bolsheviks turned their attention toward the internal threat posed by other revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces. A civil war was inevitable, and the Bolsheviks may even have welcomed the conflict as the swiftest means to domination. However, the scale of the Russian Civil War was immense. Its cost in lives was tremendous, and in these terms it remains one of the greatest calamities in human history.

The Bolsheviks immediately faced an assortment of opposition for control of the vast country, including moderate socialists thrown out of the Constituent Assembly, Mensheviks, tsarists favouring a return of the old regime, and officers and soldiers of the Imperial Russian Army disenchanted with the odious terms of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Foreign powers were disturbed by Russia's abrupt departure from the alliance against Germany and the Central Powers and sought to bring the country back into the Great War. Foreign leaders also feared the Bolshevik pledge to spread revolution across the globe as evinced by their establishment in 1919 of the Communist International, or Comintern, to promote communism worldwide, and were concerned that



The Red Terror

The devastating bloodshed the Bolsheviks unleashed on Russia

On 5 December 1917, the Cheka, or Soviet Secret Police, was created as the first such instrument of state security in Lenin's Bolshevik regime. Established to eliminate political opposition, the Cheka, under the ruthless leadership of Director Felix Dzerzhinsky, became synonymous with repression and murder as the primary instrument of the Red Terror, a systematic and ruthless campaign that resulted in the deaths of up to 200,000 people .

Sanctioned by Lenin and carried out by lieutenants such as Dzerzhinsky and Leon Trotsky, the Red Terror also targeted former tsarists and members of the bourgeoisie as enemies of the state. Originally undertaken during the Russian Civil War, the Red Terror began in September 1918 in response to the assassination of a Cheka officer in Petrograd and the nearly successful assassination attempt against Lenin that August. Even before the attempt on his life, Lenin had ordered the initiation of a terror campaign to quell civilian uprisings in various locations across Russia.

During the Red Terror, the Cheka and Red Army troops took hostages, forcing family members to join the Bolshevik armed forces, suppressed strikes with mass arrests of workers, summarily executed groups of dissenters while forcing villagers and townspeople to witness the events as warnings, and marched thousands of prisoners off to concentration camps, many never to return. They committed reprehensible atrocities, such as tying former White army officers to wooden logs and slowly pushing them into blazing furnaces where they were burned alive.

During the Russian Civil War, both sides waged terror campaigns against the civilian populace. The concurrent White Terror is thought to have resulted in the deaths of thousands.

The discovery of a mass grave of Red Terror victims outside Cheka headquarters in the Ukraine

РОССИЙСКАЯ
ФЕДЕРАТИВНАЯ
СОВЕТСКАЯ РЕСПУБЛИКА

Political demonstrators fill the streets of a Russian city during the three-year civil war. Civilian casualties were catastrophic during the conflict

> "When the Constituent Assembly convened in January 1918, sailors loyal to the Bolsheviks broke up the meeting at gunpoint"

the Bolsheviks would default on massive wartime loans that had been extended to Russia. Eventually, eight foreign nations, including Britain, France, and the United States, committed materiel and troops to the support of the Bolsheviks' foes.

In the wake of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, armed opposition to the communist government erupted across Russia. Collectively known as the "Whites" while the Bolsheviks were the "Reds", these armed forces were widely dispersed across the country, primarily in the north, north-east, and the south, where they were never able to coordinate their offensive efforts. As early as 31 October (OS) / 13 November (NS) 1917, the Bolsheviks withstood their first armed challenge as forces led by moderate socialist Alexander Kerensky, once recognised by Western nations as the head of the Russian state, were defeated by 12,000 loyal Bolshevik troops at the Battle of Pulkovo Heights, 18 kilometres south of Petrograd.

Battle joined

The Russian Civil War began in earnest along the Don River as General Lavr Kornilov joined General Mikhail Alekseyev to form the Volunteer Army, a White force of about 3,000 men. The Volunteer Army captured Rostov in February 1918, but held it for only two weeks as an army of 10,000 Bolsheviks pushed Kornilov out of the city. Suffering through sub-zero temperatures, the Volunteer Army retreated to Ekaterinodar, where Kornilov was killed by an artillery shell that destroyed the farmhouse he was using as a headquarters. General Anton Denikin took command prior to the infamous "Ice March" to the Don and gained support from Crimean Cossacks.

With his ranks swelled to 100,000, Denikin issued his Moscow Directive on 3 July 1919, launching a major offensive toward the capital city, only to be defeated following a last-minute bargain between the Bolsheviks and Anarchist forces in the Ukraine that ended the threat to Moscow. Denikin had failed to raise support from the peasants to the south, and as the White force advanced the Anarchists fell on its thin supply lines and compelled a withdrawal, since there were not enough troops to adequately defend the rear areas. Denikin's army was decisively beaten during heavy fighting around the city of Orel in October 1919, and pushed into the Crimea by the spring of 1920.

Still, various White armies posed a continuing threat, and the Bolsheviks recognised that a strong Red Army was a necessity for the defence of Moscow and Petrograd. In March 1918, Lenin had appointed Leon Trotsky as People's Commissar for War. Ruthless and brilliant, Trotsky essentially created the Red Army from the remnants of the old Imperial Army. Trotsky's superb organisational skills were primarily responsible for the turn of events in the south that saved Moscow, and when Denikin was defeated the Bolsheviks repudiated their agreement with the Anarchists, crushing them as well.

While both sides committed widespread atrocities during the three-year civil war, Trotsky was particularly adept at keeping the Red Army together with brute force. He authorised the taking of hostages, sometimes family members of officers and soldiers, imprisoning them to force men to serve in the army. He did not hesitate to have disloyal or hesitant officers executed. His policies were a component of the Red Terror campaign launched against enemies of the state in September 1918. "I give warning that if any unit retreats without orders, the first to be shot down will be the commissary of the unit, and next the commander," Trotsky warned. "Brave and gallant soldiers will be appointed in their places. Cowards, bastards and traitors will not escape the bullet. This I solemnly promise in the presence of the entire Red Army."

Red Army surge

Building the Red Army to sufficient strength to prevail in the civil war was not easily accomplished. Although the Bolsheviks controlled the population centres of European Russia and the means of production and transportation, it became necessary to adopt decidedly "anti-communist" measures to raise an armed force capable of victory on the battlefield. Despite the outcry of his fellow Bolsheviks, Trotsky instituted a program of mass conscription that brought together an army of 3 million troops by 1920 and 5 million by the conclusion of the war. He enlisted 75,000 former tsarist officers to train the draftees and bring order to the ranks.

Although the desertion rate was high and supply shortages plagued the Red Army, harsh measures known as "war communism" were instituted to keep the army fighting. The government took control of production and distribution of essential commodities, including weapons and ammunition, grain and foodstuffs, and cloth for uniforms.

After the October Revolution, anti-Bolshevik former Imperial Army General Nikolai Yudenich went into hiding. He later escaped to Finland and contacted representatives of Russia's former allies to solicit aid for the anti-Bolshevik movement in northwest Russia. Subsequently, he returned to his homeland and took command of all White forces in the region. Yudenich and General Alexander Rodzyanko combined their troops to attack Petrograd in October 1919, stretching the Red Army thinly as it was also battling White forces under Admiral Alexander Kolchak in Siberia and Cossacks in the Ukraine simultaneously.

On 14 October 1919, Yudenich captured the city of Gatchina, only 50 kilometres from Petrograd, and within a week his troops were fighting in the outskirts of the former capital. Trotsky personally rallied the defenders of Petrograd, ordering fortifications strengthened and putting every citizen to work in the effort. The White Army failed to sever the main rail line from Tosno to Moscow, and the Reds were able to reinforce Petrograd and then launch counterattacks with 73,000 soldiers. The Red 15th Army spearhead lunged toward the town of Luga, imperilling the right flank and centre of Yudenich's line. The Red 7th Army coordinated with an offensive against the White left and centre. The White army was pushed back into Estonia by the end of October and effectively disintegrated. Yudenich was captured with a large amount of money on his person and later released under pressure from Britain and France.

After their victory in the Battle of Warsaw in 1920, Polish soldiers display captured Red Army battle flags lost by the retreating Bolsheviks

International implications

The Russian Civil War was a conflict that spawned successful nationalist movements in Finland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, and helped revive the Polish national identity within its Second Republic.

From 1919-1920, the Bolsheviks fought a costly war with Poland. While Lenin tended to view the war as an opportunity to extend the Bolshevik revolution westward, the Poles wanted to expand their borders. The war ended after a disastrous Red Army campaign against the Polish capital of Warsaw.

Russia's former allies in World War I mounted a confused intervention in the civil war. When the primary reason for outside intervention ended with the armistice of November 1918, enthusiasm for armed intervention and continued supply of the White Russian forces waned. By that time, French, British, and American troops had landed at Russian port cities to safeguard supplies and provide logistic support for the White Russians. Foreign troops numbered approximately 200,000 at peak strength and did little fighting. The most serious threat from outside intervention came when Japanese troops occupied Russian territory in the Far East. American troops landed at Vladivostok in August 1918 to dissuade the Japanese from aggressive action.

Red Army troops pass in review during an inspection in the city of Kharkov during the Russian Civil War. Leon Trotsky was responsible for expanding Bolshevik forces

Murder of the royal family

More than 300 years of Romanov dynasty rule in Russia came to an end with the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II on 2/15 February 1917. Within months, the Bolsheviks had seized power, disbanding the provisional government and its Constituent Assembly. Initially, the provisional government placed the Romanov family, including Tsar Nicholas, his wife, Alexandra Feodorovna, and their children Olga, Maria, Anastasia, Tatiana, and Alexei, under house arrest in the famed Alexander Palace in the city of Tsarskoe Selo.

Due to the growing threat of political instability, the royal family were later moved to Tobolsk, east of the Ural Mountains, residing in the former governor's palace. After the Bolsheviks took power, the treatment of the royals grew more stern, and Nicholas and Alexandra were relocated to Yekaterinburg in April 1918. Their children followed a month later after Alexei, their only son and a severe haemophiliac, was healthy enough to make the trip.

The Romanovs were rapidly becoming a political liability for the revolutionaries, particularly due to the fact that their existence might inspire tsarist elements to ultimately resist the Bolshevik government.

On 16 July, the family was executed by members of the Ural Regional Soviet. The action was approved by Lenin and carried out with his knowledge. It remains one of the most despicable acts of the Soviet era. For years, erroneous rumours persisted that Anastasia had actually survived.

The Russian imperial family posed for this portrait in 1913

Leon Trotsky, People's Commissar for War, addresses a gathering of Red Army soldiers in 1918. Trotsky forged the Red Army into a winning force

Defining moment

Trotsky triumphant 26 March 1918

Leon Trotsky is proclaimed People's Commissar for War and becomes the architect of the Red Army, which eventually prevails in the Russian Civil War. Trotsky demonstrates a force of personality and ruthless will to forge an effective fighting army. He imposes harsh punishment on deserters but is willing to employ former tsarist officers. Trotsky is remembered as the hero of the civil war; however, in later years he is discredited and exiled by his rival Joseph Stalin, who assumes power after the death of Lenin in 1924. Trotsky is ultimately assassinated in Mexico in 1940.

The Bolshevik wind of change

1917

Red October
The Bolsheviks seize power in a coup d'etat after storming the Winter Palace in Petrograd and taking control of government buildings and infrastructure. Sympathetic sailors aboard the cruiser Aurora train their guns on the Winter Palace.
October/November 1917

1918

Election voided
The Bolsheviks fail to achieve a majority in the Constituent Assembly elections but refuse to share power, even with other socialist elements. Armed troops disband the assembly, and the Bolsheviks assert full control of Russia's government.
January 1918

1918

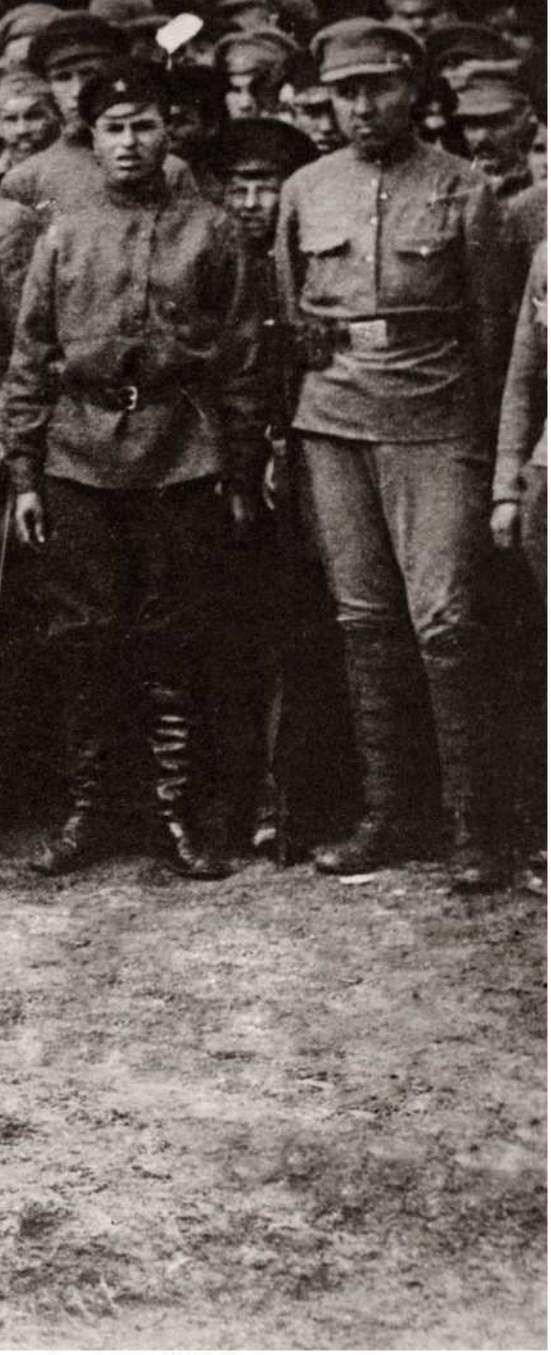
Treaty of Brest-Litovsk
The Bolshevik government succeeds in extricating Russia from the ruin of World War I, but the price is high. Vast swathes of territory in the west is ceded to Germany in the humiliating agreement.
3 March 1918

1918

Opening battle
The four-day Battle of Ekaterinodar, the first major battle of the Russian Civil War, begins. The White Russian commander, General Lvar Kornilov, is killed by an artillery shell, and his offensive is doomed to defeat.
10 April 1918

1918

Romanov demise
Deposed Tsar Nicholas II, last ruler of the Romanov dynasty, and his entire family, prisoners of the Bolsheviks, are summarily shot and beaten to death in Yekaterinburg. Their mutilated bodies are buried in unmarked graves.
16 July 1918



> "...His ranks swelled to 100,000, Denikin issued his Moscow Directive on 3 July 1919, launching a major offensive"

Kolchak: Commander and head of state

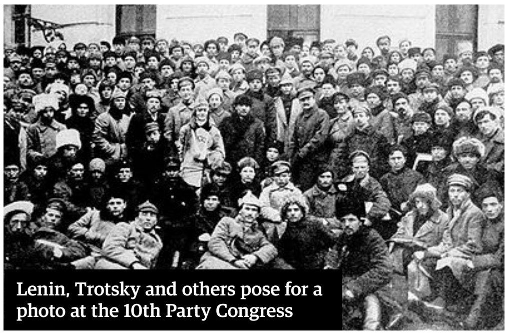
Acknowledged by other leaders of the White Russian movement as their most senior commander, Admiral Kolchak held the title of Supreme Ruler and Commander-in-Chief of All Russian Land and Sea Forces. Although Kolchak was also recognised internationally as the Russian head of state from 1918 to 1920, exercising the authority implied with his august title was problematic and ultimately an impossible task.

The White Russian armies were never really unified, fighting the Bolsheviks for a variety of reasons, including emerging nationalism that resulted in successful independence movements in Finland and the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. Often separated by thousands of miles, a conclusive consolidation of armies was never accomplished, and the hope that Britain, France, and the United States might lend logistic and military support was effectively extinguished after the armistice ended World War I.

When the Bolsheviks seized power, Kolchak was in the Far East and offered to enlist in the British Army. He was asked instead to fight to overthrow the communists from within Russia. Travelling to join the Volunteer Army in the Ukraine, he passed through Siberia and was persuaded to join the anti-Bolshevik movement in the region. After the British overthrew the Socialist-Revolutionary Directory that had previously governed there, Kolchak was installed as the new government's leader.

With promises of unlimited support from the Supreme Allied Council in Paris, Kolchak adopted pro-Western policies and marshalled forces to fight the Bolsheviks. Among those who supported his initiative were the Czechoslovak Legion, formerly fighting for the Allied cause during World War I in the hopes that their homeland would be freed from the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, along with Polish and Cossack troops.

Early White offensives were successful in Siberia as Kolchak allowed subordinates familiar with land operations to take direct command. White troops captured Ufa and Kazan in the spring of 1919 and approached the city of Samara as anti-communist uprisings added to their numbers and offered material support along the way. The Red Army formations Kolchak confronted were poorly led and disorganised. They fell back, and within weeks the



Lenin, Trotsky and others pose for a photo at the 10th Party Congress

Defining moment

The Moscow Directive 3 July 1919

White Russian General Anton Denikin issues his Moscow Directive, calling for a decisive offensive against the Bolshevik capital city to the north. By autumn, the White Russian army, 100,000 strong at the outset of the campaign, has become overextended. The advance is thwarted by an alliance of convenience between the Bolsheviks and the Anarchists, who harass the White Russian supply lines across the Ukraine. The White force retreats to the Crimea and eventually evacuates via the Black Sea to Turkey. When the threat from Denikin has diminished, the Bolsheviks turn on the Anarchists and destroy them.

Defining moment

10th Party Congress 8-16 March 1921

The 10th Congress of the Russian Communist Party is held in Moscow, and a ban on international factions within the party is approved as Resolution No. 12 "On Party Unity." In the midst of the Congress, the Kronstadt Rebellion erupts in response to a collapsing economy and widespread famine, prompting Lenin to implement the New Economic Policy in the hopes of stimulating productivity. The New Economic Policy is more market-oriented following the civil war and includes a step back from full nationalisation of some industries while allowing farmers to sell some grain and products on their own.

1918

Red Terror rampant
The Bolsheviks unleash the scourge of the Red Terror on the Russian people in an effort to silence suspected enemies of the communist regime. Thousands are killed. Victims include former tsarists, White Russian sympathisers, 'counter-revolutionaries' and other dissenters.
September 1918

1918

The Great War ends
The armistice is signed, ending World War I and removing a primary reason for international intervention in the Russian civil war. Former allies had hoped to compel Russia to reenter the war against the Central Powers.
11 November 1918

1920

Kolchak executed
After being interrogated for several days in the city of Irkutsk, Admiral Alexander Kolchak, the internationally acknowledged Russian head of state and leader of White forces in Siberia, is executed by firing squad.
7 February 1920

1920

Siege of Perekop
The Bolshevik victory at the siege of Perekop effectively ends the Russian Civil War in terms of conflict with the Whites. The Bolsheviks control all of the Crimea, and organised White resistance is virtually ended.
17 November 1920

1921

War Communism

The exigencies of war required a radical reboot of communist thought and policy

On 9 May 1918, the Bolshevik government announced a grain monopoly to keep the Red Army supplied with food and declaring that all surplus farm products were the property of the state. In return, producers were to receive only token fixed payments based on production quotas. The catalyst for the move was the distance of major cities from agricultural areas in Russia. The Bolshevik power base resided in the cities, far away from food sources, and the grain monopoly was also intended to provide rations for workers.

A month later, the government moved closer to implementing a planned economy. War Communism was enacted in June. Peasant uprisings and disturbances resulted when armed troops were sent into the countryside to collect surplus foodstuffs from the farmers. In the meantime, millions of Russians had fled the major cities, moving to the country in search of food, bartering goods for sustenance. Between 1918 and 1920, Petrograd lost 72 per cent of its population and Moscow 53 per cent.

Administered by the Supreme Economic Council, War Communism included rationing of food and other commodities with centralised distribution, a ban on private enterprise, nationalisation of industries with centralised management, state regulation of foreign trade, and control of workers with strikes forbidden. War Communism was considered a necessity, as well as an advancement toward the ideal of a planned economy. It was replaced by the New Economic Policy in 1921.

Profiteers sell foodstuffs in a rail yard during the Russian Civil War. Such activities were outlawed under the grain monopoly and War Communism

White Russian General Lvar Kornilov stands with other officers. Kornilov was killed by a Bolshevik artillery shell early in the Russian Civil War

Whites controlled more than 300,000 kilometres of territory, encompassing a population of 7 million.

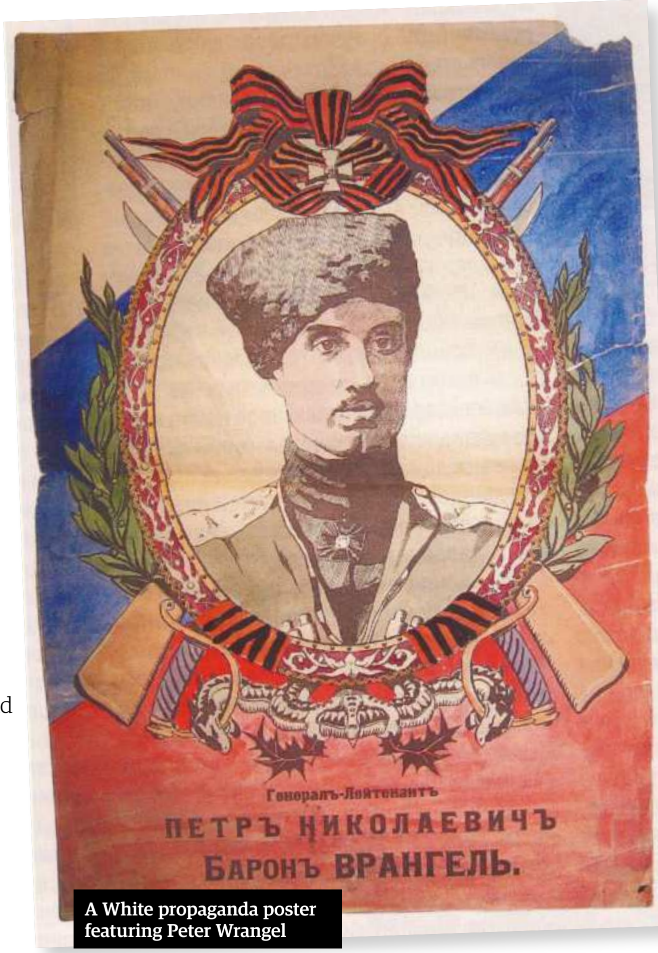
The Red Tide turns

Almost as swiftly as the Siberian Whites gained the advantage, their position began to erode. Kolchak was far from accomplished in the art of diplomacy and succeeded in alienating other anti-Bolsheviks, including the veteran Czechoslovak Legion and the Poles. His army had been run on a shoestring from the beginning, and its long advance outstripped its capacity for resupply.

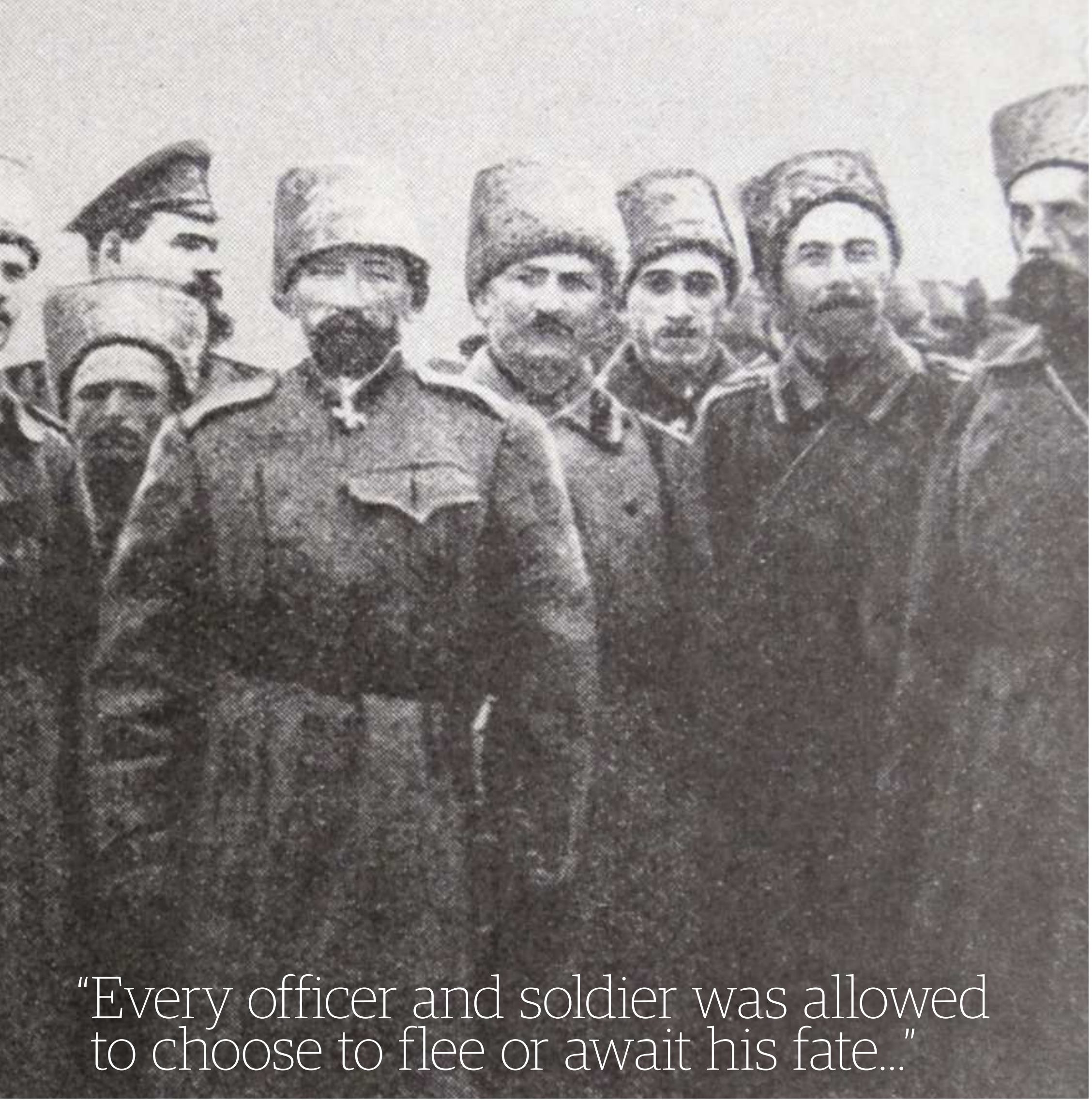
Utilising the basic principle of interior lines, Trotsky was able to funnel thousands of fresh Red Army troops into the combat area, poised for a counterstrike that fell on the Whites at Ufa in late April. On 9 June the Red Army reoccupied Ufa, and its capable 5th Army commander, Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevsky, led the subsequent drive to wrest control of Siberia from Kolchak. When the Red Army broke through the great natural barrier of the Ural Mountains, it was the beginning of the end for the White forces in the region. Driving toward Chelyabinsk, the Reds captured the city at the end of July, forcing the Whites to split in two, north and south, in order to prevent their encirclement.

While Kolchak faced mounting dissent from within his own ranks, the White forces were temporarily able to slow the Reds along a defensive line that fronted the Ishim and Tobol rivers; however, that line was breached in October 1919. Discipline in the White army evaporated, and the demoralised rabble retreated toward Omsk, allowing the Reds to divert some troops southward to join the fight against Denikin. The White army in Siberia was ravaged by disease, and Omsk fell to the victorious Reds in November. 50,000 prisoners were taken.

Kolchak fled along the Trans-Siberian Railroad toward the city of Irkutsk, but he was detained along the way by soldiers of the Czechoslovak Legion. When the local government reverted to the control of the Socialist Revolutionaries, Kolchak resigned his positions even as the new government passed a resolution to dismiss him from service. With assurances that his passage would be safe, Kolchak resumed his journey



A White propaganda poster featuring Peter Wrangel



"Every officer and soldier was allowed to choose to flee or await his fate..."

to Irkutsk, seeking the protection of the British military liaison office.

Those plans went awry, and Kolchak was delivered to the Socialist Revolutionary leaders in the city. Despite a directive to the contrary from Moscow, Kolchak was questioned at length by a five-man commission of the Revolutionary Committee from 21 January through to 6 February, and shot by a firing squad on the morning of 7 February 1920. His former prime minister, Viktor Pepelyayev, died in the same hail of bullets.

Conclusion in the south

In the autumn of 1919, White forces in the south had failed to link up with Kolchak's army in Siberia. Instead, Denikin had insisted on one last thrust toward Moscow, which ended in defeat. A significant rift had developed between the commander and his subordinate, General Peter Wrangel, who was dismissed from the army and went into exile in Constantinople.

Within weeks, however, Denikin was forced from command and Wrangel was recalled to assume the leadership of the rapidly eroding White army. Once Kolchak was defeated, the Red Army threw significantly greater resources to the south in an effort to finish off White resistance. Wrangel instituted some reforms within his thinning ranks, now numbering about 41,000, and made political overtures that were in essence too little too late. On the battlefield, the Whites were pushed back to the shores of the Black Sea, where he organised an evacuation to Turkey in the autumn of 1920. Every officer and soldier was allowed to choose whether to flee or remain in the Crimea and await his fate at the hands of the Red Army.

White army troops occupied fortifications at Perekop and Sivash, where they fought a delaying action against the besieging Reds led by Military Commissar Mikhail Frunze. The siege, and with it the major military operations of the Russian Civil War, ended on 17 November 1920, three days after Wrangel and 150,000 others had boarded ships and sailed to safety. The Crimea was firmly under Bolshevik control.

Historians offer different dates for the actual conclusion of the war, particularly since political unrest and peasant uprisings flared in protest at government policies into at least 1922. However, the defeat in the Crimea extinguished any fleeting hope for a White victory. For the next 69 years, the victorious communist regime would rule Russia and neighbouring states as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Estimates of the casualties suffered in the Russian Civil War vary widely but point to the same conclusion. The conflict was a human catastrophe. Atrocities were commonplace on both sides during the civil war. While battle casualties approached 3 million killed and wounded, the number of victims claimed in the course of the Red Terror that menaced the civilian population along with the great famine that ravaged the region of the Volga, push the number of dead to as many as 10 million.

Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin addresses Red Army soldiers in 1919. Lenin was ruthless, employing the Red Terror to maintain discipline during the civil war

© Getty; Alamy

Behind the smile of the tortured beauty

Revolution stripped Natalie Paley of her father, her brother, her home and her country. Her flame burned brightly in exile but her stunning beauty could not conceal the tragedies that shaped a life of unhappiness

She was born in splendour, and ended her days in darkness. Natalia Paley, called Natalie by her family, was born on 5 December 1905 at her parents' mansion in Boulogne-sur-Seine outside Paris. Her father, Grand Duke Paul Alexandrovich, was the son of Tsar Alexander II, brother of Alexander III and uncle to Nicholas II. This should have ensured a life of grandeur, but fate proved particularly cruel to Natalie Paley.

The problems began before her birth. In 1889, the 28-year-old Grand Duke Paul had married Princess Alexandra, who was the daughter of King George I of Greece. Alexandra gave him a daughter, Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna, but died shortly after the birth of their son, Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich, in 1891. After four years, the lonely widower met the pretty, vivacious Olga von Pistohlkors, wife of an officer in the Grand Duke's regiment. An affair began and in 1896, Olga gave birth to Paul's son, Vladimir. Scandal soon followed; she divorced her husband and in 1902, she married Paul in Italy. As Olga was a commoner, the union was morganatic. Nicholas II stripped his uncle of his income, seized control of Marie and Dmitri and banished Paul.

Undaunted, and with millions of roubles deposited in foreign banks, the Grand Duke and his new wife, who received the courtesy title of Countess von Hohenfelsen from Prince Regent Luitpold of Bavaria, settled in Paris, where they lived in an elegant villa manned by a staff of 16. It was here that Natalie was born, joining her brother Vladimir and her two-year-old sister Irina. Despite the exile, life was comfortable and happy. Both parents doted on their children and Natalie was especially close to her brother, taking part in his amateur theatricals for the amusement of specially invited guests.

In 1914, Nicholas II allowed the Grand Duke and his family to return to Russia. Olga built a replica of their Parisian mansion in the imperial enclave of Tsarskoye Selo, and relations with the throne improved. Natalie was not technically a Romanov, but she mixed with her Russian relatives, including the four young daughters of Nicholas and Alexandra. Paul suffered from painful ulcers that largely kept him from fighting in World War I, but Olga opened a hospital for the wounded and took her daughters to visit soldiers. In August 1915, the Tsar gave her a new title: ten-year-old Natalie became Princess Paley.

Paul was one of many voices warning Nicholas and Alexandra against the approaching catastrophe. In December 1916, Natalie's half-brother Dmitri helped Prince Felix Yusupov murder the notorious Rasputin. Despite the family's pleas, the Tsar sent Dmitri to his regiment in Persia, a move that undoubtedly saved his life. When the Russian Revolution came in 1917 and drove the Romanovs from their throne, Natalie was astonished to find their mansion surrounded by armed sentries. In

PRINCESS NATALIE PALEY

b.1905-d.1981

Brief Bio

Eldest daughter of Grand Duke Paul Alexandrovich of Russia and his morganatic wife Countess Olga von Hohenfelsen, after fleeing revolutionary Russia, Natalie Paley gained fame as a model, actress and socialite, but could never escape her traumatic past.

A 1916 group portrait of Grand Duke Paul and his second family. Natalia sits at the front of the group

September, the Provisional Government ordered the family to be held under house arrest. At first, Natalie thought it was all a great adventure, and she enjoyed chatting with the soldiers. Then in November 1917, the Bolsheviks took control. A mob ransacked Natalie's house, arrested her father and imprisoned him in Petrograd. After two weeks, ill health finally won the Grand Duke's release, but the worst was yet to come.

With bank accounts expropriated, money was scarce and the family's possessions were pilfered. Lenin took their favourite motorcar and one by one, formerly faithful retainers deserted. There had been 64 servants in 1914, but by January 1918 only three remained. Natalie's parents could no longer afford to heat their mansion and so they moved the family to a smaller villa at Tsarskoye Selo belonging to one of the Grand Duke's nephews. The uncertain situation took an ugly turn in April, when the Bolsheviks began rounding up male Romanovs. Natalie's father was too ill to be moved, but soldiers arrested her brother Vladimir and exiled him to Siberia. Not until later would Natalie find out that the Bolsheviks had actually killed him on 18 July in a forest outside the village of Alapayevsk.

In August, Natalie was woken in the middle of the night by wild shouts. The Bolsheviks had again come for her father, and would not be put off. Natalie clung to his neck as armed soldiers pulled them apart and hustled him off to Petrograd's Shpalernaya Prison. When Olga took Natalie to see him, they found that Paul was dangerously thin. "At 12," Natalie remembered, "most girls were reading *Robinson Crusoe* and watching Douglas Fairbanks movies. I was taking scraps of bread to my father in jail." Then one night, after Olga left her daughters with their governess, a drunken group of Bolsheviks stormed the house and ransacked the family's few remaining possessions. The men dragged 13-year-old Natalie and her sister Irina, 15, into the cellar and repeatedly raped them. Natalie never recovered from this traumatic event. Although she managed to conceal her emotional scars beneath an apparently placid surface, the assaults left her with a horror of physical relationships.

Olga had wanted to keep her young daughters in Russia as she worked for their father's release, but the barbaric attack convinced her to send them away. One December night, she kissed them farewell and tearfully handed them over to friends who promised to take them to Finland. Natalie lived in perpetual terror of being caught as the little group raced toward freedom on sleighs and in the backs of cattle carts. They had to cross the frozen Gulf of Finland on foot at night, hiding beneath white sheets to blend into the snow to avoid

Grand Duke Paul Alexandrovich, the father of Natalia Paley, circa 1890

The Peter and Paul Fortress in St Petersburg, where Grand Duke Paul was last imprisoned

The Romanov executions

Natalie's family members suffered a horrible fate at the hands of the Bolshevik government

Between June 1918 and January 1919, the Bolshevik Government executed 18 members of the Romanov dynasty. Natalie's father, Grand Duke Paul, spent the last six months of his life at Shpalernaya Prison, condemned to a cell so small he could scarcely move and his health quickly deteriorated.

After a brief time in a prison hospital, the Bolsheviks loaded the seriously ill Grand Duke onto a stretcher and took him to Petrograd's Peter and Paul Fortress, where he joined his cousins, Grand Dukes Nicholas, George Mikhailovich and Dmitri Konstantinovich. Early on the morning of 30 January, soldiers brought the four men into the freezing courtyard. Paul watched from his stretcher as the Bolsheviks shot his three cousins. Too weak to stand, he lay helpless as a sentry approached and shot him before hurling his body into a mass grave.

Even more horrific was the fate of Natalie's beloved brother Vladimir. For several months he had been imprisoned at Alapayevsk in Siberia, along with Tsarina Alexandra's sister Grand Duchess Elisabeth, who had become a nun; Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovich; three sons of Grand Duke Konstantin Konstantinovich; and two faithful retainers. Early on the morning of 18 July 1918, the Bolsheviks took the prisoners to an abandoned mineshaft and hurled them in alive. It took several days for most of the victims to die from their wounds and starvation.

Serge Lifar, one of Natalia's alleged lovers, performed in Stravinsky's *Apollon Musagete* in 1928

Bolshevik patrols. After 15 chilly miles, the sisters were so exhausted that they begged to be left to die on the ice. Their protectors, though, pressed on, and after two horrific days, Natalie and her sister reached safety.

For two months, Natalie and Irina had no word of their parents as they waited anxiously at a sanatorium in Ranha. One late February afternoon, their bedraggled mother Olga suddenly appeared, having barely escaped Russia with her own life. She brought devastating news: Natalie's father was dead. Hoping to spare her daughters, Olga told them that he had peacefully succumbed to his illness. It was a year before Natalie learned the truth: the Bolsheviks had executed her father at the end of January 1919.

As soon as her daughters could travel, Olga took them back to Paris. It was a bitter homecoming. Revolution had torn Natalie's family apart and left her depressed. At least the Paleys did not have to worry about starving: unlike many other Russian émigrés, they still had their elegant Parisian villa. Olga sold the mansion, purchased a smaller house and used the sale of her remaining jewellery to buy a villa in Biarritz. After some time, Natalie's half-brother Grand Duke Dmitri and half-sister Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna joined them, reuniting the remnants of a family torn apart by revolution and Bolshevik bullets.

Olga was a doting mother, but it is unlikely that she fully understood the horrors Natalie had experienced. Deciding that her morose daughter needed to be with girls her own age, she sent Natalie away to an elite finishing school in Switzerland. With the move went any sense of stability that the fragile young girl may have felt. She was now more isolated than ever, a deeply traumatised teen who walled herself off from others to conceal the horrors haunting her. Natalie

Natalie's striking looks catapulted her to fame as a model and an actress

Lucien Lelong, pictured in 1925, two years before he married Natalia

admitted that she felt "so different from other girls," unable to laugh or join their raucous games. She retreated into "sad things, poetry, the cold and lightning washed antechamber of death." Her childhood, she said, had been washed in "all the Romanov blood" spilled during the Revolution.

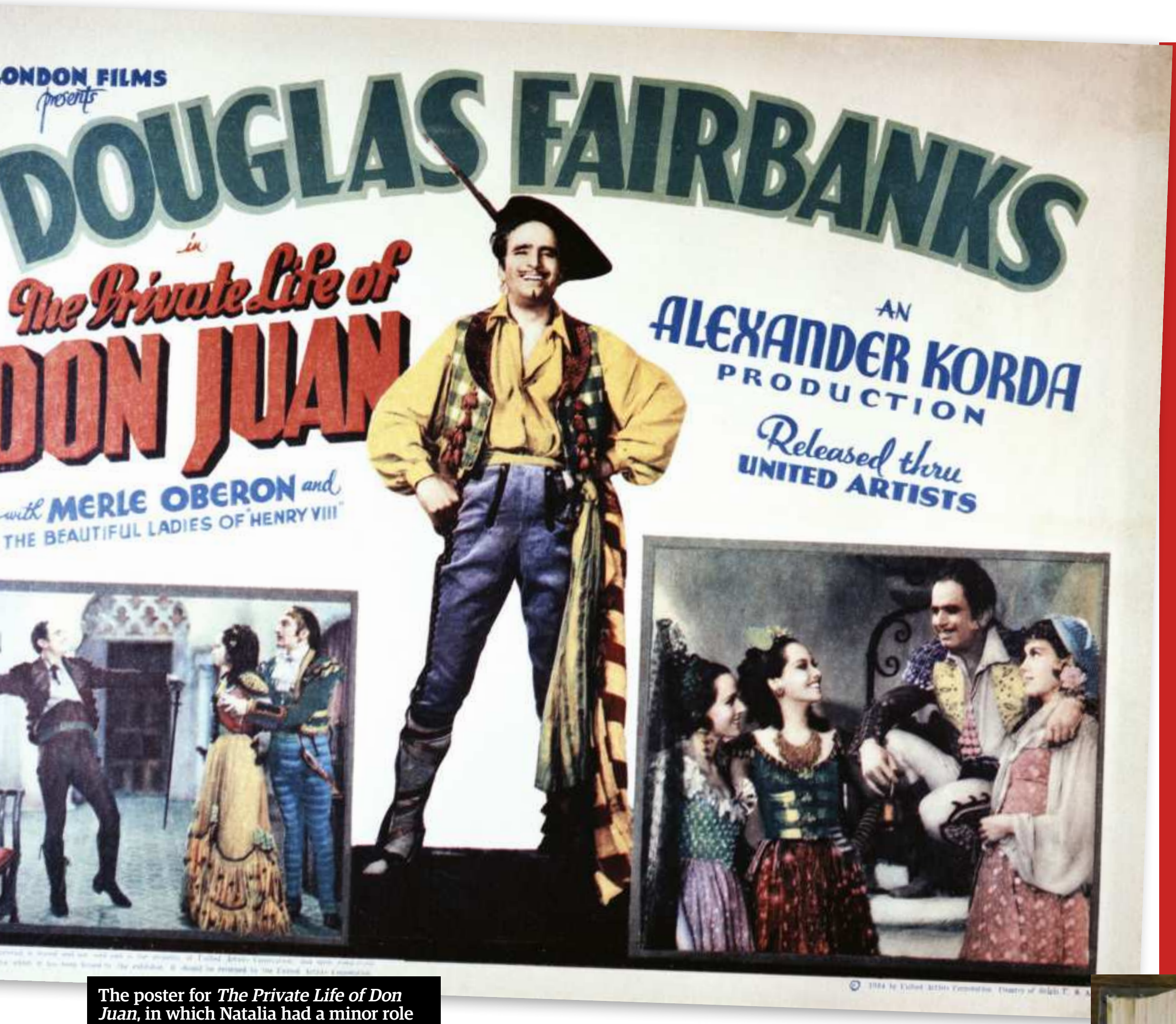
When Natalie eventually returned to Paris, she was an enigma. On the surface cool and ethereal, Natalie alternated between a carefree mien and sudden burst of temper or fits of crying. No one, though, could ignore her beauty: tall and slender, with doe-like gray eyes and striking blonde hair, Natalie was elegant and graceful, somehow combining aristocratic refinement with the modernity of a Jazz Age flapper. The look did not go unnoticed and Natalie was determined to deploy her beauty as the one asset she possessed. In 1922, she took her first modelling job at a Parisian fashion house run by a Russian émigré. She found the attention appealing and soon her photos began appearing in *Vogue*, launching a brief but brilliant career as one of the most sought-after and most photographed women in Europe.

In 1926, Natalie found herself relentlessly pursued by prominent French couturier Lucien Lelong. Although married, the homosexual Lelong wasn't interested in a liaison. Instead, he recognised that he could exploit the beautiful Russian princess to both market his clothing and raise his own social standing. In July 1927, he divorced his wife and, on 10 August, he wed Natalie at the Russian Orthodox Cathedral of St Alexander Nevsky in Paris.

> "Natalie never forgot being raped at the age of 13 and the idea of sex made her panic"

It was a marriage in name only. Natalie never forgot being repeatedly raped at age 13 and the idea of sex made her panic. She consciously sought out relationships with homosexual men, safe in the knowledge that they would not push for physical consummation. Within a few years of marrying Lelong, Natalie set gossips aflutter over an assumed affair with ballet dancer Serge Lifar. Lifar worshipped Natalie's beauty, and she in turn appreciated his devotion, but there was no question of any romance – Lifar was ballet impresario Sergei Diaghilev's lover and thus posed no physical threat. Lifar's charms faded when homosexual writer and director Jean Cocteau appeared on the scene and briefly captured Natalie's attention. He was amusing and even dangerous – indeed, he introduced her to the pleasures of opium – but stories that she became pregnant by him and had an abortion seem to have been merely the products of Cocteau's vivid imagination.

Natalie's star rose in the fashion world. The greatest photographers of the era – Cecil Beaton, Horst and George Hoyningen-Huene – shot her for *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*. But what had once seemed so amusing no longer satisfied. Natalie left Lelong (they finally divorced in 1937) and began a new career in film, landing her first role in 1933's *L'Épervier* with Charles Boyer. Her part was undemanding; she merely had to look beautiful, which she accomplished with ease. Though fleeting, the role attracted the attention of international hostess Elsa Maxwell, who suggested that she go to Hollywood.



The poster for *The Private Life of Don Juan*, in which Natalia had a minor role

Natalie's life often seemed to be a series of half-thought out adventures, at first promising excitement that would temporarily erase the ghosts of her past, only to disappoint when reality set in. So it was to be with her film career. Natalie arrived in Los Angeles in 1934 and her title and her beauty quickly won her entrée in Hollywood. A minor role in *The Private Life of Don Juan* brought her to the attention of famed director George Cukor. Openly gay, Cukor had an affinity for beautiful women, and soon Natalie was part of his enchanted circle, which included such luminaries as Marlene Dietrich, Greta Garbo and Katharine Hepburn, whom she quickly befriended. Indeed, there was even speculation that Natalie and Hepburn had a brief romantic tryst in these years.

Cukor gave Natalie a small role alongside Hepburn and Cary Grant in his film *Sylvia Scarlett*. It was a flop and by 1935, Natalie was back in France, where she appeared in two last movies, *Folies Bergère* (1935) and *Les Hommes Nouveaux* (1936). Although *Les Hommes Nouveaux* was a moderate success, Natalie had grown tired of the experiment, and after six films she abandoned acting for good.

She also abandoned France and chose to return to America, where she had found so many delicious possibilities. This time it was New York that called. Her half-sister Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna now worked as fashion director for department store Bergdorf Goodman, and got Natalie a job modelling for couturier Mainbocher, whose gowns were favoured by the new Duchess of Windsor. It was at a party that the Princess first met John 'Jack' Wilson, a jovial and wealthy 38-year-old theatrical producer. It was no secret that, for a number of years, Wilson had been having an affair with Noël Coward - indeed, Natalie considered Wilson's homosexuality as much a recommendation as his wealth - and so, on 8 September 1937, she married Wilson in Fairfield, Connecticut. Noël Coward stood as best man.

In 1941, Natalie became an American citizen. After years of turmoil and wandering, she finally had a permanent home. The Wilsons lived in luxury, with a lavish penthouse overlooking Central Park and a country estate in Connecticut. Although World War II brought a temporary halt to society pleasures, Natalie found diversion in two new romantic but platonic relationships.

The first was with writer Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, whose emotive and worshipful letters appealed to her vanity. The second was a lengthier friendship with author Erich Maria Remarque, who seems to have been genuinely in love with Natalie and pursued her with vigour. It's doubtful that she

Russian aristocrats in the world of fashion

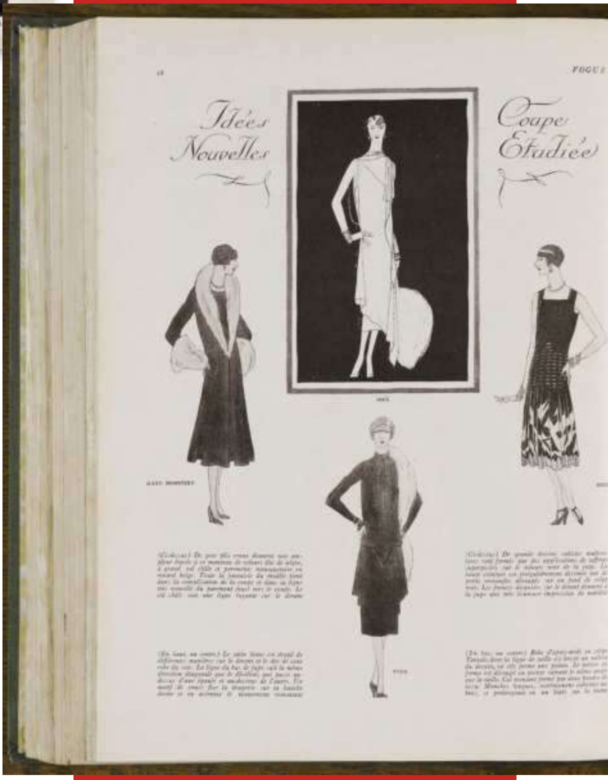
In the heart of Paris, the princess and her family were taking the industry by storm

Natalie Paley was one of many Russian aristocratic émigrés who burned brightly in the 1920s world of Paris fashion.

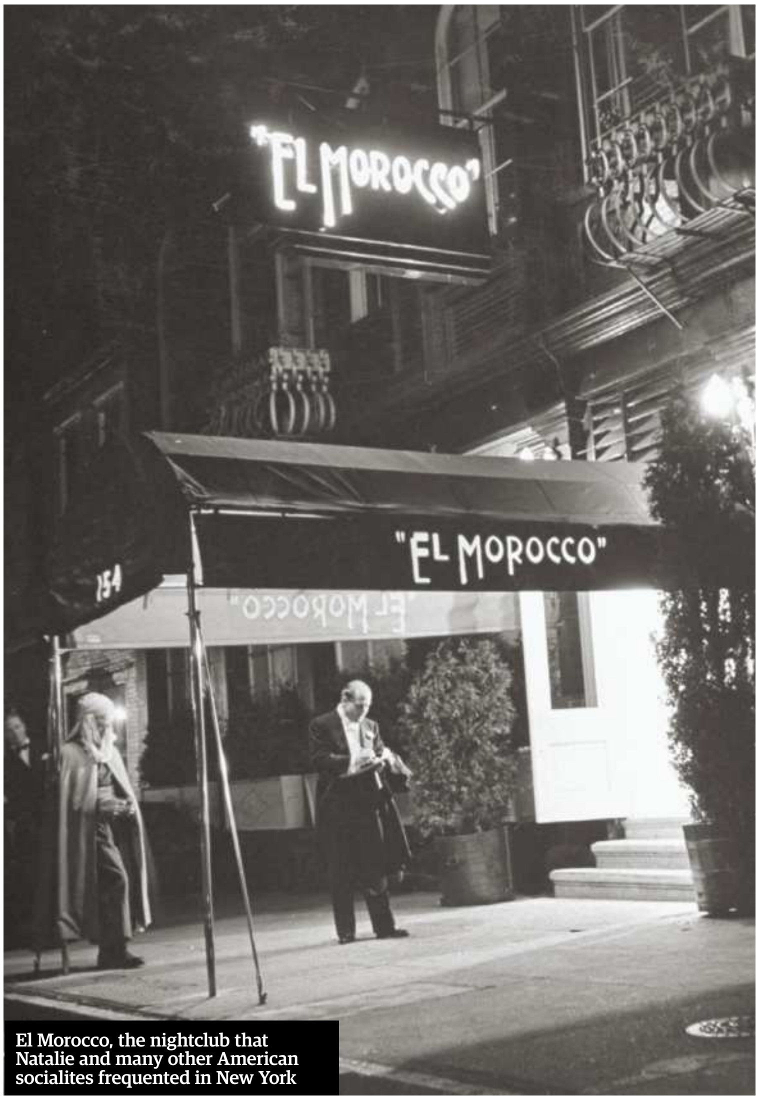
Designer Coco Chanel had been the first to utilise these refined ladies as models, and soon the couture houses across the city were awash with elegant princesses displaying the latest fashionable ensembles.

Several of Natalie's relatives took this interest further. In 1921, her half-sister Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna opened a textile shop called Kitmir, which provided exquisite embroidery for many of the Parisian fashion houses, including Chanel.

Others were more flamboyant in their approach. Prince Felix Yusupov used his notoriety as Rasputin's assassin to found a haute couture establishment with his wife Irina. Called Irfe after the first two initials of their respective names, the salon quickly became a hit in society and Natalie occasionally modelled their extravagant lamé gowns during presentations at the Hotel Ritz.



A series of sketches, one of which is from Maison Irfe, the fashion house set up by Felix Yusupov and his wife, Irina


El Morocco, the nightclub that Natalie and many other American socialites frequented in New York

shared his passions, however, and his jealousy and possessiveness gradually drove her away. By 1951, he had fallen in love with actress Paulette Goddard, though he did immortalise Natalie as 'Natascha' in his novel *Shadows In Paradise*.

Wilson never cared what his wife got up to as long as she was discreet. By the 1950s, the couple occupied the centre of New York City's glamorous society. They were regulars at exclusive clubs like El Morocco and 21, where they mixed with socialites such as Babe Paley, CZ Guest, and the visiting Duke and Duchess of Windsor. There were polo matches on Long Island and winters at a villa in Jamaica, a seemingly endless round of entertainments to keep Natalie preoccupied and content. Things began to unravel when the Wilsons befriended Cole Porter and his wife Linda – indeed, it was whispered that while their husbands pursued a romantic liaison, Natalie and Linda took to commiserating over endless bottles of alcohol.

But Natalie was not the only one who had taken to drinking. By the mid-1950s, Jack had morphed into an alcoholic. His career faltered and his increasingly erratic displays condemned the couple to social death. Natalie did her best, but Wilson managed to outwit her and had servants smuggle alcohol into their home. The drinking took its toll and soon he was confined to a wheelchair and, suffering from delusions, he had to be restrained to protect others from his violent outbursts. Finally, on 29 October 1961, Wilson died of cirrhosis.

At the age of 55, Natalie was a widow. In a theatrical gesture of mourning, she draped the walls of her Manhattan apartment bedroom entirely in black satin and shuttered the windows to the world outside. Natalie was still elegant, but the woman whose entire existence had centred on her beauty was no longer young. Age brought disillusion. Always more introspective than willingly social, she began isolating herself, passing days watching television and doing crossword puzzles. Callers were never welcomed, she refused to see visiting Romanov relatives – even her sister Irina – and only communicated by letter and telephone. She had never been outgoing by nature, but now she withdrew completely.

"Natalie became a US citizen. After years of wandering, she finally had a permanent home"

By the mid-1970s, diabetes claimed Natalie's eyesight. Her universe reduced to darkness and deprived of her solitary pleasures, Natalie's ties to life gradually fell away. Increasingly frail, she suffered from a broken hip and, the day after Christmas in 1981, a fall in the bathroom left her with a fractured neck. She was taken to Roosevelt Hospital but Natalie was too tired to fight. "I want to die with dignity," she whispered. According to rumour, a last remaining friend smuggled some sleeping pills to her so that the princess could make a graceful exit. Natalie was pronounced dead on the morning of 27 December 1981. She had just turned 76. A week later, the traumatised princess was buried alongside her last husband, John Wilson, in the First Presbyterian Church Cemetery in Ewing, New Jersey, forgotten by the glittering world she had once inhabited.

Natalie stars alongside Charles Boyer in a scene from the 1933 film *L'Epervier*

Natalie and her second husband, John Wilson

Hans von der Hardt's 1935 portrait of Natalie in a fur cape

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What if…

Trotsky had come to power?

USSR, 1924

Joseph Stalin emerged strongest in the power vacuum left by Lenin's death in the USSR. However, if fellow Politburo member Leon Trotsky had risen to power, things could have been very different. Professor Geoffrey Roberts believes the state would have still been under authoritarian rule, as this would have been required to maintain the communist grip on power: "He would have been a more moderate dictator, but there would have been a cult of Trotsky to bind the country together, ensuring loyalty to the system."

The Trotsky-led USSR weathers the storm of the 1920s and 1930s using "the same brutal terroristic measures as Stalin, but maybe not quite as extreme." Trotsky sees the use of Stalin as an ally, but also fears his influence in equal measure. To appease him, he is made a deputy to General Secretary Trotsky and plays the role that Vyacheslav Molotov did in the 1939 pact with Joachim von Ribbentrop and Nazi Germany. Regarding the Third Reich, Trotsky and Stalin would have acted in a similar way: "Both Stalin and Trotsky perceived the threat that Hitler and the Nazis posed. Trotsky saw the solution as more of an intense revolutionary struggle. Stalin took a more moderate cause in the anti-fascist alliance. Having said that, Trotsky took a more moderate view when he was in power after the revolution than he did when he was in opposition."

As war dawned, Trotsky, who didn't suffer from the same insecurities that plagued Stalin, wouldn't have purged the Red Army. Roberts sees this as a possible handicap, as under Stalin, "Mikhail Tukhachevsky and his allies were replaced by generals who were younger, dynamic and more technically advanced." Leadership-wise, Trotsky and Stalin may well have been similar. "They both believed in a highly centralised military leadership, advocated a disciplinary regime and were prepared to use terror tactics to impose their will. However, I do think Stalin would have been better. He was a much more personable character. Trotsky was more aloof - a bit cold."

The USSR wins the war, but in the first few years of the conflict, negativity towards Trotsky grows. Stalin sees an opportunity to assert his authority but Trotsky senses the threat and banishes him from the Soviet Union for life. However, the military are also firmly against him and the new breed of Red Army generals march on the Kremlin after the war's end. "After the war, a challenge would have come to Trotsky from his generals, so the military may have moved against him. Trotsky may not have been as successful as Stalin in getting the power back from the military and to the party. He could have won the war but then been replaced by one of his generals." Rather than a military dictatorship developing, the USSR is liberalised; having profound effects on the upcoming Cold War and the rise of Mao in China. Whatever happens, Trotsky is left to reflect as the Red Army marches on the Kremlin.

PROFESSOR GEOFFREY ROBERTS

Historian, biographer and political commentator, Geoffrey Roberts is professor of history at University College Cork, Ireland, and has written books on the USSR in World War II, the Soviet role in world politics and the Battle of Stalingrad. He is the author of a trilogy of books on prominent Soviet leaders: *Stalin's Wars: From World War To Cold War, 1939-1953* (2006); *Molotov: Stalin's Cold Warrior* (2012); and *Stalin's General: The Life Of Georgy Zhukov* (2012). Professor Roberts is a frequent contributor to Irish and British newspapers and to Irish, British and Russian TV and radio programmes.

Alternative timeline

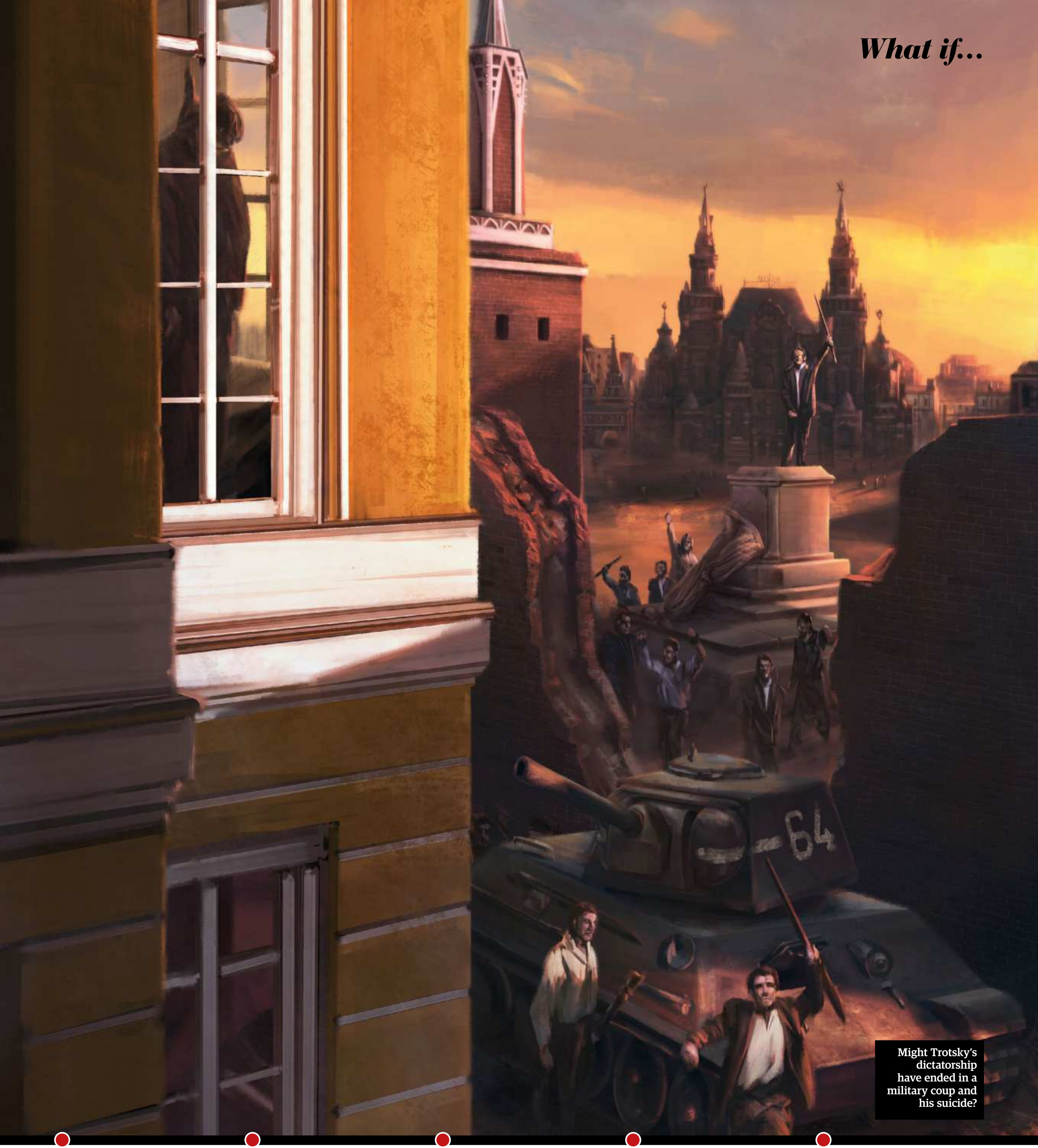
Death of Lenin
The revolutionary leader dies. Trotsky quotes Lenin's Testament as the reason he should be the new leader. The majority agree.
21 January 1924

Rise of Trotsky
Trotsky becomes undisputed leader and organises Stalin, Kamenev and Zinoviev into his chosen political posts, with himself as general secretary of the Central Committee. **1924**

The USSR under Trotsky
Two years in and the Bolshevik regime answers only to the cult of Trotsky in an authoritarian Soviet state. Trotsky outlines his very own five-year plan for the economy. **1927**

The economy falters
The Soviet economy isn't as developed as it would have been under Stalin due to an indecisive Trotsky. To silence him, Stalin is essentially made second in command. **1931**

International relations
The Soviet Union is admitted to the League of Nations with Trotsky unable to get his idea for global communism off the ground. The Red Army is expanded with no purges. **1934**



Might Trotsky's dictatorship have ended in a military coup and his suicide?

The Stalin-Ribbentrop pact
Trotsky senses the danger of Hitler and moves to ease relations. Stalin is sent to negotiate as the two nations sign the pact of non-aggression. **23 August 1939**

Opening of the Eastern Front
With the Red Army controlled by old-school generals, the Wehrmacht are very successful. Trotsky is under pressure as Tukhachevsky is unable to deal with the Blitzkrieg. **June 1941**

Turn of the tide
The struggle continues on, but thanks to a lack of purges, the Red Army eventually gains the upper hand. However, it is in a critical condition. World War II will be a pyrrhic victory. **1943**

Trotsky under pressure
The death toll of the war puts Trotsky's popularity at an all-time low. Stalin attempts a coup but is unsuccessful. He is banished from the USSR for life as punishment. **1946**

End of the Trotsky regime
Despite Stalin's exile, the military leadership has had enough and stages a coup. Trotsky, seeing that all is lost, commits suicide in his office. A new era is about to begin. **1947**

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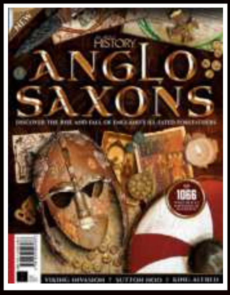
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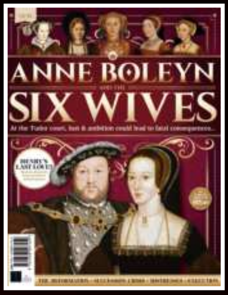
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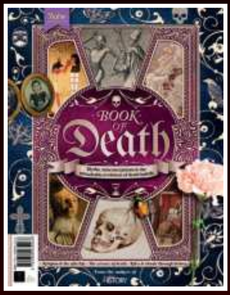
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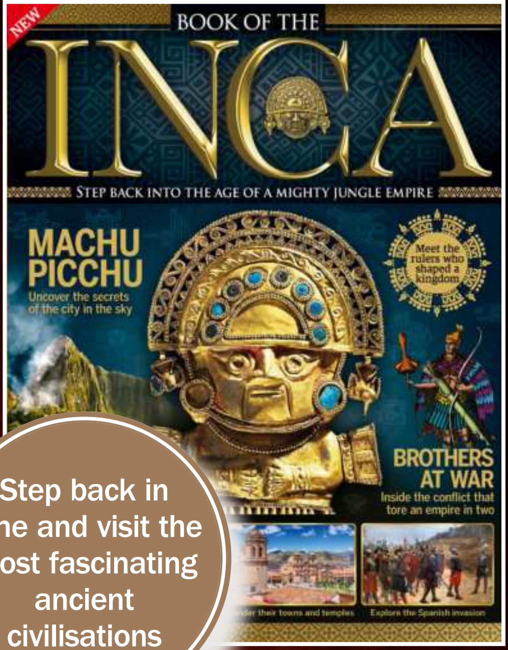
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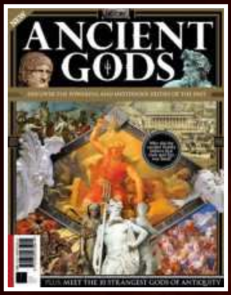
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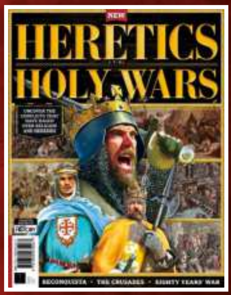
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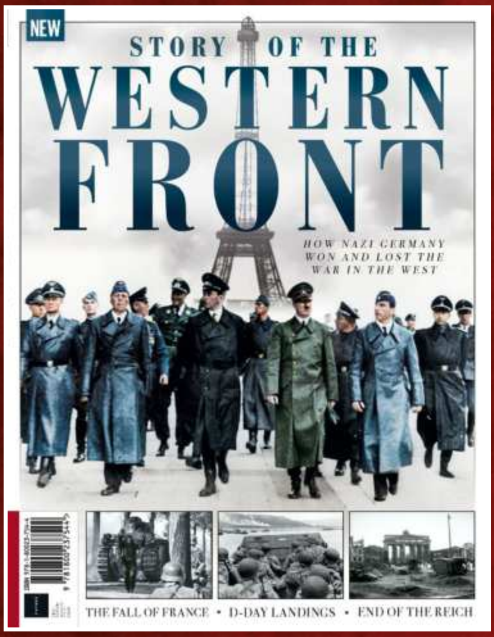
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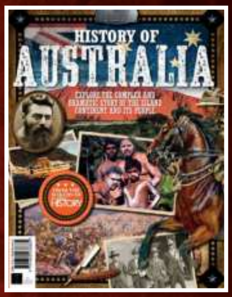
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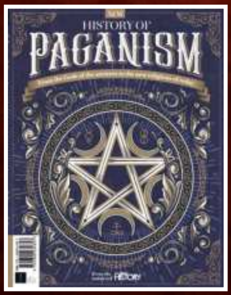
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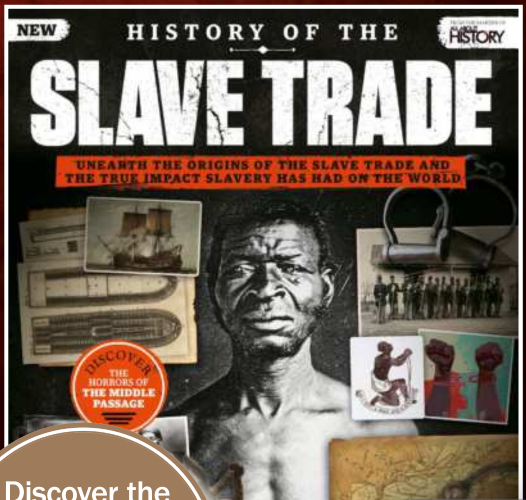
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